Investigating and Evaluating ‘Acts of Citizenship’
Undocumented Activism and the ‘We are Here’ Collective in the Netherlands

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I would like to thank the members of ‘We are Here’ for generously taking the time to talk with me. These individuals struggle everyday in order to survive within a state that refuses to acknowledge them as human beings. It is important to recognize this struggle and contest the inequalities it creates through providing a legitimate seat for undocumented, failed asylum seekers at the negotiating table.

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Introduction

‘We are Here’ is a group of failed asylum seekers who formed a coalition in late 2012 after squatting in the center of Amsterdam. As statusless, illegitimate residents of the Netherlands, these individuals are not afforded any rights such as, food, shelter, work or political clout. Over the past five years, the group has occupied numerous abandoned buildings following continuous evictions by Dutch officials. Despite these challenges, the group grew, attracting media attention and supporters, with the goal of exposing the world to their situation. Demonstrations were held in solidarity and the stories of individuals within the organization were shared via press releases and interviews. Each time a new ‘home’ was adopted, government officials would initiate evictions, driving members to new locations, challenging the groups’ ability to remain together. Within the Dutch parliament, the issue of failed asylum seekers and the ‘We are Here’ collective is contentious and divisive, yet has not resulted in significant structural change (We are here at Entrade 600 2018). The state has suggested insufficient solutions, which often frame the group’s circumstances as a humanitarian emergency, seeking to solve the problem on a case-by-case basis as opposed to rewriting the rules. The “squatters movement” in Amsterdam has taken up much of the responsibility to provide for these undocumented individuals, further relieving the burden from the shoulders of the Dutch government (Dadusc 2016). Often the undertaking of providing shelter and provisions is taken on by local municipalities, supporters or humanitarian organizations, suggesting a divide between national and local governmental practice (Tilotta 2017).

Despite their uneasy circumstances, the ‘We are Here’ group has managed to maintain their cohesiveness to a certain extent. The group still exists and organizes themselves regularly. They have an active website where they post about demonstrations or events as well as their progress. Through their activist movement, ‘We are Here’ potentially reflects a pertinent trend in citizenship studies. This trend recognizes the agency of statusless human beings within a state and the dynamic nature of the notion of citizenship (van den Hemel 2018, p. 441). Excluded individuals can be rehumanized through a conceptualization that acknowledges and studies the civic agency and political
involvement of undocumented migrants. Engin Isin (2008; 2009) extensively and brilliantly theorizes this transformation as ‘acts of citizenship.’

Though the concept will be described more fully in the discussion of my conceptual framework, I will briefly describe it now in order to provide a frame for the following information. ‘Acts of citizenship’ arose from the perception that previous definitions of citizenship were becoming more and more inadequate, namely those tied to the idea of state membership (Isin 2009, p. 369). With the rise in the past few decades of new, sometimes statusless actors becoming claimants of rights, Isin concluded that citizenship studies could not resort to old theories in order to investigate new phenomena (ibid., p. 370). Instead, citizenship and ‘the political’ as a result, needed a new vocabulary. Isin (2008; 2009) employs several terms (sites, scales, actors, modes, forms) in order to “theorize citizenship as an institution in flux embedded in current social and political struggle that constitute it” (Isin 2009, p. 370). Furthermore, in order to understand the conditions of the fluidity and instability of citizenship, it is necessary to study “enactments of citizenship” or instances when there is a rupture of order or habitus (ibid., p. 379). The word ‘act,’ according to Isin implies a break in habitus and reveals the ‘enduring’ nature of human beings (ibid., p. 379). ‘Acts of citizenship’ therefore stand in contrast to instances of active citizenship, such as voting, or taxpaying, which are routinized, institutionalized, and do not imply a break in the normal or understood (ibid., p. 380). In enacting or actualizing an act, an actor emerges as an activist citizen. This occurs through a struggle for and the claiming of rights (ibid., p. 381, 383). Lastly, Isin suggests that studying the dynamic nature of citizenship with ‘acts of citizenship’ is most applicable through the analysis of a social group whose struggle contest formal citizenship ideas (ibid., p. 383). ‘We are Here’ provides an ideal candidate for a productive and rich investigation of citizenship through this lens.

I will approach studying the ‘We are Here’ group as undocumented activism and specifically through ‘acts of citizenship’ and how these acts transform subjects into activist citizens. ‘Acts of citizenship’ involves ideas of critical citizenship studies and seeks to theorize the political without involving “an already constituted territory or its legal ‘subjects’” (Isin 2009, p. 370). While this conceptual framework has been used to study other instances of undocumented activism (Nyers 2003; Nyers 2010; McNevin
2007), no academic work has used this frame to look extensively at the Netherlands or the case of the ‘We are Here’ collective. (I will use the term ‘undocumented’ activism in line with Swerts’ (2017) usage in order to highlight the fact that these subjects do not have status or documentation, but are residing in a country illegally). The actions of the ‘We are Here’ group go beyond our traditional understandings of undocumented activism and studying these acts and transformations through the lens of ‘acts of citizenship’ will produce relevant contributions to a developing field. I have utilized interviews and website documents as my data set in order to gain a full picture of the group. Through systematically outlining each aspect of Isin’s ‘acts of citizenship’, I will be able interpret the group through this lens and study it’s potentially transformative effects on the notion of citizenship. This will involve discussing how the actors themselves are created through ‘acts of citizenship,’ what sort of rupture enables the act and the claims to rights that they are making. In order to do so, I will follow a pathway provided by Isin. This pathway will be further discussed in my methodology. Completion of this pathway will provide answers to the questions: How does the ‘We are Here’ group enact themselves as citizens? What sorts of struggles for rights entail this enactment? How do individuals within ‘We are Here’ break away from their positions as failed asylum seekers and thereby rupture given notions of citizenship? Does this ultimately transform the institution of citizenship?

In the next chapter, I will discuss the significant circumstances surrounding the situation that the Dutch asylum policy puts the ‘We are Here’ group in, as well as provide context for the group’s current position. The second chapter of this research provides an outline of my conceptual framework by addressing changing notions of citizenship, shifts in academics, and undocumented activism. The third chapter outlines the methodology selected to best answer my research questions. The fourth chapter seeks to operationalize this methodology by creating a coding framework, incorporating my conceptual framework into my methodology and outlining my data analysis strategies. The fifth chapter analyzes the data set through the identification of various rights. The sixth chapter interprets these results and evaluates their effects on the stability of notions of citizenship.
Background and context

The Dutch asylum case

In this section I will outline relevant aspects of the Dutch asylum system thereby characterizing the situations and experiences of the members of ‘We are Here.’ It is important to provide a context of the ‘acts of citizenship’ as this information will become significant in my analysis. This also demonstrates the unique nature of this particular group of rights-claiming individuals, thereby highlighting a potential empirical gap which I seek to fill through this research.

The Dutch state itself exists as a unique case because of its relatively exclusionary asylum policies compared with the rest of Europe. According to an English translation of an article published in the Volkskrant, “refugees are less likely to be given a residency permit in the Netherlands than in Germany, Belgium or Sweden.” This was the first time that admittance frequency was calculated and compared within the E.U. (DutchNew.nl 2016). This data from the ministry’s Scientific Documentation and Research Center (WODC) stands in contrast to the general idea that the Netherlands is more open and tolerant than other countries (DutchNew.nl 2016). Within academic literature concerning citizenship, the Netherlands is said to prioritize social rights as a social democratic state. This is in contrast to liberal democracies such as the United States, which, “relies on markets to allocate social rights and emphasizes civil and political rights,” or corporatist states such as Germany where, “social rights are accorded a greater role but are not available universally” (Isin & Turner 2002, p. 3). This is noteworthy because while social rights are considered a priority amongst social democratic states, the Netherlands is considered relatively selective when it comes to providing social rights to refugees.

There are many reasons for this potential disconnect. Isin and Turner (2002) conclude that while citizenship rights and obligations may vary by state, the typologies based on governmental and economic variations are no longer very useful as they do not capture the more dynamic aspects of citizenship that are present in the 21st century. The process of citizenship no longer involves simply the distribution of rights, but also process of safeguarding and development in the allocation of those rights (Isin & Turner 2002, p. 4) Additionally, the Netherlands is relatively liberal in their granting of rights to
certain international groups, such as allowing limited voting rights for non-citizen residents, but remains ungenerous towards other groups (Xenitidou & Sapountzis 2017, p. 78). Academics suggest that selectivity stems from an “Anglo-American, post-war consensus,” about the erosion of civic values and social citizenship within western liberal democracies, towards neoliberal tendencies of exploitation and inequality (Clarke 2004; cited in Isin 2008, p. 16). Within a system of inequality, irregular migrants become sources of cheap labor. In the Netherlands, failed asylum seekers do not present an economic utility to the state but are instead employed as a political tool. Through employing a vague and complicated asylum policy, the state exploits the image of the failed asylum seeker as a symbol of desertion and helplessness to stand in direct contrast to a citizen who is protected by the state (Kalir 2017, p. 66). This idea will be discussed further in the Conceptual Framework chapter of this thesis. The processes of the Dutch asylum policy will be discussed next.

Within the Dutch state, undocumented, failed asylum seekers take on their own specific and distinctive category. These people are referred to systematically as ‘uitgeprocedeerde,’ or “out-of-procedure,” denominated as OOPSs in Barak Kalir’s 2017 journal article. (This acronym is useful and applicable to my research and will be adopted for use in this paper to reference this specific category of people in the Netherlands). If and when asylum-seekers have been denied protection and status by the Dutch state, they are expected to leave the Netherlands independently within 28 days or be forcefully removed and sometimes detained (Kalir 2017, p. 63). The Dutch state offers failed asylum seekers elective assistance with their return home. Interestingly, the largest category of people in the records of the Dutch Repatriation and Departure Service is made up of those who have failed to receive asylum, subsequently opted to not use programs which assist in their repatriation, decided against informing the state of their location, and are consequently labeled “independently returned without supervision” (ibid., p. 64). It is common knowledge that many failed asylum seekers remain in the Netherlands as they refuse or are unable to return to their home countries for various reasons. These reasons are beyond the scope and interests of this paper. OOPSs are not officially recognized by the state and are “illegal.” They cannot receive state provisions and do not have the right to work. They are therefore largely reliant on assistance from
family, friends, local and national non-governmental organizations and humanitarian groups (ibid., p. 64).

In this process of recording and the subsequent ‘derecording’ of supposedly “solved” asylum cases, the state “removes their formal status as political subjects” by pretending that OOPPs no longer exist (ibid., p. 64). This form of desertion, criminalization and invisibilization directly contradicts “the idea of a rational modern state that strives for legibility in controlling the population it governs,” and exemplifies a shift from the all-seeing modern state to inclusive exclusion (Mezzadra & Neilson 2011, cited in Kalir 2017, p. 65). In its place, colonial tendencies selectively apply regulations when serving certain bureaucratic interests and overall result in the ‘west’ purposively disenfranchising noncitizens (Harvey 2005, cited in Kalir 2017, p. 66). The neoliberal shift in migration governance through disownership places full responsibility for the condition of OOPPs in the hands of the OOPPs themselves. The juxtapositioning of the deserted and helpless OOPPs and the protected and cared for citizens may also suggest a political strategy by the state in order to gain legitimacy and control. The state knowingly keeps OOPPs in an incredibly vulnerable place in society by not taking responsibility for them and continuing broken asylum policies. For these individuals, means of survival become limited to breaking the law and remaining dependent on supporters and organizations for help, though this is often also criminalized (Kalir 2017, p. 66). The state then frames actions as public disorder even though it is the result of the deliberate desertion of undocumented migrants within a tolerant welfare state (ibid., p. 67)

The Dutch asylum policy has been internationally criticized several times since the formation of the ‘We are Here’ movement. In 2015, discussions about whether the state should provide provisions for OOPPs led to a Dutch political crisis, threatening the parliament’s coalition at the time (Kalir 2017, p. 70). This was in response to a judgment submitted by the European Committee of Social Rights, which stated that the Dutch government must offer assistance in line with the European Social Charter (Williamson 2014). Despite further discussions, the coalition agreement in 2017 simply renewed previous responses of dispersal and invisibilization. Conditional concessions were made, as reception centers were opened for failed asylum seekers who agreed to being sent
home within two months. These reception centers offer “a bed, a bath, and some bread,” commonly referred to as ‘BBB’ (van Selm 2019). While criticism may fuel discussion, this historically has not resulted in the sort of structural change that the group wishes to see. This form of abandonment through an exclusionary state policy against a category of people in this specific situation, makes this case unique. In order to relate these conditions to a discussion about ‘acts of citizenship,’ it is essential to understand citizenship as a concept that ‘acts of citizenship contests and the changes it has undergone throughout history and especially within the past two decades. The next chapter of this research will attempt to summarize and theorize these concepts in order to provide a framework for the analysis of the ‘We are Here’ group.
Conceptual framework

Changing conceptions of citizenship

Citizenship has typically been understood to entail membership to a state that is a legally recognized status. It is defined by certain rights and duties, which are often expressed on a national level (Isin 2008, p. 16). This idea has emerged and evolved over the past few centuries together with tensions between included and excluded groups of people (Swerts 2014, p. 296). In Greek and Roman times, the requirements of citizenship included “masculinity, warriorship and property.” These foundational sites as well as its ‘occidental’ focus have largely disappeared in the past century (Isin 2009, p. 373). The scope of citizenship has expanded in order to include previously marginalized groups, including women and ethnic minorities (ibid., p. 296). Historically, the actions of those without legal citizenship status, or non-citizens, have mobilized change towards the inclusion of these groups and the expansion of the reach of citizenship (Sassen 2005; McNevin 2011, cited in Swerts 2014, p. 297). This has shaped what it means to be a citizen as well as what it means to be excluded from the privileges of having citizenship status. This relational aspect of citizenship has led to discussions about the dynamic nature of citizenship and its tendency to feature both the domination and the potential empowerment of a social group. “Citizenship is not membership. It is a relation that governs the conducts of (subject) positions that constitute it” (Isin 2009, p. 371). Citizenship has developed to include not only discussions about the institutions that maintain given meanings of citizenship and protect those with legal status, but also discussions about political participation that influences and reshapes the connotations themselves (Swerts 2014, p. 297).

Since the 1970s, globalization and the increased presence of non-citizens (illegal aliens, immigrants, migrants) within sovereign states (Isin. 2008, p. 15), has lead to a reevaluation of the notion of citizenship and the relevant actors within a political space (Swerts 2014, p. 296). The increased mobility of people, capital, and labor across borders has brought new intensity to the citizenship studies debate, as globalization creates new identities and new tensions within these sites (Isin 2008, p. 16). With the influx of refugees (often referred to as irregular migration) into the European Union
fleeing war torn countries such as, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan in 2015, and the inability and unwillingness of states to accommodate them through their regular channels of refugee governance and naturalization, this reassessment has become all the more prevalent and important (Depraetere & Oosterlynck 2018, p. 693). With the spatial characteristics of the nation-state blurred by globalization and irregular migration, traditional linkages between territory and citizenship become distorted. “Crucially, the citizen should not be considered a by-product of the state” (McNevin 2007, p. 661).

Contemporary states, as a result, have experienced increased tension between governance practices that vacillate between territorial and neoliberal rationalities (McNevin 2007, p. 657). Given notions of territoriality, sovereignty, and the identity of the citizen that generally constitute the dominant lens through which political conduct is legitimated, have been destabilized and evolved forms of political belonging have emerged (ibid., p. 657). Citizens and non-citizens alike have become significant actors when discussing the meaning of citizenship in a globalized world.

However, state institutions have failed to completely evolve and adapt to the new influx of migrants and their introduction into the political space. “The unofficial maintenance of irregularity thus becomes a performance in which the sovereign re-enacts its territorial credentials.” (McNevin 2007, p. 669) Undocumented immigrants are confronted with the historical issue that their non-status identity infers, namely exclusion from legally acting politically (Nyers 2010, p. 129). The argument was introduced by Hannah Arendt, who defined “being political as the capacity to act” (Arendt 1969, cited in Isin 2009, p. 380). As a result, asylum seekers in many European countries exist in a state of limbo and are actively invisibilized by the state in which they reside. “While estimates vary widely and there is no consistent cross-country data, numerous sources confirm that irregular migrants presently constitute significant portions of migrants and labour forces throughout Asia, North America, Europe and the Gulf States. This presence and the neoliberal policy framework to which it is connected presents a legitimacy crisis for states whose raison d’être is based in the sovereign protection and privileging of a territorially bounded community of citizens” (McNevin 2007, p. 657). Similarly, asylum seekers who reside in European countries exist in what Swerts calls a ‘liminal political’ state (Swerts 2017, p. 380). Undocumented immigrants are ‘excluded insiders,’ meaning
that they are recognized but are not legitimate (ibid., p. 384). This is also referred to as a ‘citizenship gap,’ in which refugees suffer from a sharp divide between citizenship and human rights (Brysk & Shafir 2004, p. 6).

**State (in)action**

While the transformation that undocumented activism represents is significant, it is important not to analyze political belonging through a binary conceptual framework, which categorizes state influence as declining or growing. Instead we should acknowledge the potential that irregular migrant activism has to reshape state practices while being careful not to ignore the reassertion of sovereign and territorial identities through various means of migrant governance (McNevin 2007, p. 674). “Irregular migration, by its very definition, is a reminder of the centrality of the state to prevailing notions of belonging. When state authorities act to punish and deter irregular migrants they reinforce a territorial account of belonging that confirms the sovereign status of the state and its citizens against unwanted external intrusions” (McNevin 2007, p. 657). Throughout the world, undocumented immigrants are actively criminalized and victimized by the state. Davies discusses the consequences of inaction in an article describing the structural violence and “necropolitics” of the unofficial refugee camp in Calais, France. Many end up in Calais because of coerced mobility while inside the EU (Davies 2017, p. 1264). Refugees suffer from both action and inaction by the state, described by Galtung as a form of cultural violence (ibid., p. 1275). This also suggests a movement away from state responsibility for refugees similar to the case of OOPSSs in the Netherlands. Instead, neoliberal forms of asylum management focus on the individual as self-responsible, denying refugees agency as a group.

Domopolitics is an idea created by Walters (2004), which is employed by states who attempt to maintain the given notions of citizenship, territory and security, ignoring other political or cultural possibilities (Walters 2004, p. 256). According to Walters, “domopolitics embodies a tactic which juxtaposes the ‘warm words’ of community, trust, and citizenship, with the danger words of a chaotic outside--illegals, traffickers, terrorists; a game which configures things as ‘Us vs. Them’” (Walters 2004, p. 242). A country is viewed as a home which has to be governed and is positively portrayed in security in

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order to gain legitimacy, while security also plays upon fear (ibid., p. 242). Domopolitics theorizes the active resistance of trends in notions of citizenship discussed above. Strategies of state actors minimize the political agency of undocumented migrants and invisibilize non-citizen actors.

**Shift in academics**

As a result of this new prevalence of non-citizens within the states’ political space, academia has experienced a significant shift towards studying citizenship as practice, though not necessarily away from studying citizenship as status (Isin 2008, p. 17). Academics such as Seyla Benhabib inhabit the sector of citizenship studies engaging in with this idea. Benhabib anticipates a transformation of citizenship in the near future through a dialogue of rights and identities, whereby political citizenship and political agency will exist within new identities formed through new actors such as, non-citizens (Benhabib 2004, p. 117, 169). “The effect of this shift to practices has been the production of studies concerning routines, rituals, customs, norms and habits of the everyday through which subjects become citizens” (Isin 2008, p. 17). This shift has existed in congruence with a movement away from discounting the political agency of non-citizens, specifically asylum seekers (Agamben 1998; Mbembé 2003; Isin & Rygiel 2007), towards recognizing them as political subjects and relevant actors (Depraetere & Oosterlynk; Bosniak 2006; Swerts 2017; Nyers 2003). Each of the latter academics identifies actions by non-citizens as the contestation of current citizenship conceptions and institutional practices. Through the analysis of actions such as, developing border governance procedures, academic investigations work towards a reevaluation of the current practices within an exclusive system and the emergence of a more inclusive system.
Undocumented activism and ‘Acts of citizenship’

Contestation by non-citizen actors, namely undocumented asylum seekers, transforms individuals into political subjects, and therefore requires a new conceptualization of what it means to be part of the political. Despite the emergence of these new status-less political actors and the “new intensity of struggles over citizenship” as a result of globalization, debates surrounding citizenship failed to incorporate new actors into their theoretical frameworks (Isin 2009, p. 369). The concept of ‘acts of citizenship,’ created by Engin F. Isin, is meant to fill this theoretical gap in citizenship studies. Within this gap, citizenship is a dynamic instead of static institution and relational instead of based on membership to a state (Isin 2009, p. 371). Undocumented migrant activism reflects these changing conceptions of citizenship, which alter how we view political participation and belonging. ‘Acts of citizenship’ seeks to theorize this transformation and provide a new vocabulary for how we analyze citizenship and understand its definition (Isin 2009, p. 368). ‘Acts of citizenship’ is defined by Isin as, “those acts that transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders aliens) of being political by bringing into being new actors as activist citizens (claimants of rights and responsibilities) through creating new sites and scale of struggle” (Isin 2008, p. 39). I will use this definition as a foundation for explaining this complex but insightful concept and later as a framework for the analysis portion of my research.

The first term that needs clarification is the act. In line with the dynamic definition of citizenship, being a citizen, or being an insider, is not just a classification and a status but also entails being “one who has mastered modes and forms of conduct that are appropriate to being an insider” (ibid., p. 372). This involves making diverse decisions that are associated with the various rights and responsibilities entwined within citizenship (Isin 2008, p. 15). Citizens become citizens through learning these everyday norms and habits, suggesting the existence of habitus or “ways of thought and conduct that are internalized over a relatively long period of time” (Isin 2008, p. 15). This describes substantive citizenship, which can be possible through formal citizenship, but only depicts the development of a persona of citizenship over a longer period of time, through legitimate institutions, and in stable conditions (ibid., p. 17). ‘Acts of
citizenship’ is interested in how subjects begin to act as citizens, through claiming rights and responsibilities, without this stability (ibid., p. 17). Breaks from habitus or ruptures in the given order, practice or common ways of thought are the acts (ibid., p. 18). They are distinct from actions because acts are actualized through actions (Isin 2009, p. 379). Acts are creative in that they do not follow a script but instead create scenes. Creating a scene involves contesting what is the appropriate behavior in a given situation thereby implying both a disturbance and a performance (ibid., p. 379).

The next term that needs to be defined is the activist citizen. When scenes are created through acts, the person who is performing the act is making the difference and actualizing a rupture (ibid., p. 380). Actors who take on this role, become activist citizens rather than active citizens, who “participate in scenes that are already created” (Isin 2008, p. 38). Actors within the investigation of citizenship therefore do not necessarily need to hold status, but can conduct themselves as citizens by claiming rights (Isin 2009, p. 370). ‘Acts of citizenship’ entail, “those moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens – or, better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due” (Isin 2008, p. 36). By enacting themselves as citizens, through different forms of being political (modes and forms), subjects “constitute themselves (and others) as subjects of rights” (Isin 2009, p. 371).

The investigation of ‘acts of citizenship’ entails the investigation of activist citizens, who produce new sites and scales through acts (Isin 2008, p. 16). These terms need to be defined in order to further introduce a theoretical framework, methodology, and analysis. Sites are “fields of contestation around which certain issues, interests, stakes as well as themes, concepts and objects assemble” (Isin 2009, p. 370). Scales are “scope of applicability that are appropriate to these fields of contestation” (ibid., p. 370). Scale can be overlapping and involve several different levels (ibid., p. 370). The vocabulary of sites and scales are used instead of fixed categories such as, a specific location or a boundary. This reflects the fluid and dynamic nature of the revised definition of citizenship employed by Isin and is based on empirical rationale (ibid., p. 370). Sites and scales also often overlap and intersect such as in the case of the Greek polis, which is both a site and a scale (ibid., p. 372).
In sum, ‘acts of citizenship’ are acts where, with new sites and scales of struggle that are transformed through creating scenes and writing scripts, subjects become activist citizens who claim and articulate rights and transform and contest forms and modes of being political (Isin 2008; Isin 2009). Being political entails having the capacity to act (Arendt 1969; cited in Isin 2009, p. 380). By acting to disrupt and redefine the sociopolitical order, political subjects are formed, as opposed to political subjects producing ‘acts of citizenship’ (ibid., p. 36). “By being ‘activist citizens’, undocumented migrants creatively and innovatively rewrite political scripts and (re)invent modes of being together as a community” (Swerts 2014, p. 298). This includes acting on rights that the state does not recognize such as collective action, sometimes resulting in the criminalization of individuals. McNevin (2011) expands this theory to include contestation of legal status, national, gendered and racial citizenship, and discourses (McNevin 2011, p. 127).

A similar idea provides a broader view of undocumented activism. Non-citizen citizenship seeks to acknowledge the significance of the process of acts of citizenship, as opposed to limiting it to ‘moments.’ It is defined as “the plethora of political practices through which non-citizens make claims to belonging, inclusion, and recognition in their societies of residence (Swerts 2014, p. 299). Migrant activism of undocumented migrants who do not have access to voting or other formal political activities, tend to participate in “demonstrations, community meetings, signing petitions, lobbying, and civil disobedience actions” (Swerts 2014, p. 299). Their goals often include trying to become visible. “The types of action, content of claims, framing of demands, and modes of organization depend upon the social, cultural, political, and spatial context in which non-citizen citizenship practices are staged” (Swerts 2014, p. 299). Evolving “political geographies” may provide insights into how new conceptions of citizenship will reconfigure the trajectories of and assumptions about notions of political belonging and irregular migration.

This conceptual chapter has outlined significant literature, which provides the theoretical foundation for this research. I will now outline the methodology I have selected in order to systematically and accurately apply this conceptual framework to the ‘We are Here’ group. I will first outline the basis for my selection of the ‘We are Here’
group as ‘acts of citizenship’ as points of research. Then, I will analyze my data analysis strategy by outlining thematic analysis. Lastly, I will describe my data set and justify my decisions.
Methodology

Research design

Through the use of numerous academic articles, as outlined in my literature review, I have created a conceptual framework that will be used in order to organize my analysis and answer my research questions. It is important to analyze data in a systematic manner in order to yield meaningful results, especially in qualitative research (Attride-Stirling 2001, p. 386). Methodologically, I employ a qualitative research design, which combines aspects of a cross-sectional design and a case study. While I seek to study ‘acts of citizenship’ as it relates to undocumented activism and contribute to literature which researches these two topics, I also seek to elucidate the unique features of the ‘We are Here’ collective in Amsterdam. According the Bryman (2012), this is common when a researcher is, “guided by the specific research questions that derive from theoretical concerns” (Bryman 2012, p. 69). By selecting ‘We are Here’ as my critical case, this research seeks to further explore the well-developed theory which I have outlined in my conceptual framework (Bryman 2012, p. 70). A critical case, is used when, “the researcher has a well-developed theory, and a case is chosen on the grounds that it will allow a better understanding of the circumstances in which the hypothesis will and will not hold” (ibid., p. 70). This implies a deductive approach. But, in my coding, I have also incorporated new codes that seek to further incite a more singular and nuanced analysis of undocumented activism within the Netherlands. These new codes utilize an inductive approach (Nowell et al. 2017, p. 8). This will be further discussed later on when I go into further detail about my coding process.

‘Ground up’ approaches and feminism as entry points

While my initial interest in ‘acts of citizenship’ stemmed from research into migrant activism, this approach also represents a valuable and progressive alternative to other methods of citizenship studies. A ‘ground’ up approach resembles the shift away from studying citizenship as status by moving the focus from political institutions that have actively preserved ideas of citizenship towards social actors who have negotiated and enacted it (Xenitidou & Sapountzis 2018, p. 77). The lives and struggles of marginal
groups become the location from which knowledge is produced. This echoes a feminist approach to social and political research advocated by Sandra Harding, a key academic in feminist standpoint theory, and refined by Rutvica Andrijasevic in relation to ‘acts of citizenship’ (Harding 2006, cited in Andrijasevic 2013, p. 49). Initiating research from the origins of the mobilizations of marginalized people (women, ethnic minorities, refugees) works to, “decentre the standpoint of the elites and advance a critique of dominant knowledge claims” (Harding 2006, cited in Andrijasevic 2013, p. 56). At these points, feminist standpoint theory and ‘acts of citizenship’ highlight the subjective and localized aspects and experiences of oppressed groups. While recent literature about citizenship in relation to migrants does not always fail to start from these points of mobilization, those that do tend to have limited explicit discussion of this important methodological decision and often lack in a methodological discussion as a whole. In discussing my methodology and research choices in full I intend to highlight the agency of the researcher in making these decisions. Additionally, it is essential to describe sampling and data analysis techniques in qualitative research because this deficiency leads to a lack of transparency (Bryman 2012, p. 406).

‘We are Here’ and ‘acts of citizenship’

Concerning the Netherlands specifically, this research will provide a more accurate and complete interpretation of what it means to be a political participant (Andrijasevic 2013, p. 57). Literature which tends to privilege Dutch national actors and Dutch institutions, “as the main channels through which political participation takes place, is not value neutral or universal” (ibid., p. 57). These sorts of analyses instead carry assumptions about political participation and underscore overly simplistic and binary explanatory frameworks that seek to categorize citizenship as passive or active (ibid., p. 57). Extensive studies of the ‘We are Here’ collective have done just this, and none have discussed the group in relation to ‘acts of citizenship’ in depth. As mentioned before, this is important because while other forms of citizenship studies focus on citizenship as formal status and marginalized groups as excluded or powerless, ‘acts of citizenship’ shift attention towards highlighting “how subjects constitute themselves as citizens irrespective of their status, and in doing so makes collective and marginal struggles its entry point of analysis” (ibid., p. 49).
Additionally, this specific migrant activist group is unique because all members are failed asylum seekers, and fall under a specific category in the Dutch government, ‘uitgeproceerde,’ or ‘out-of-procedure’ (OOPSs) (Kalir 2017, p. 63). This makes this group appealing to study because it will generate knowledge that is fundamental and at the same time distinct. This is important because the discussion in the media, parliament, and in academic literature surrounding refugees and migration is often muddled by indistinctive terminology that fails to properly categorize individuals and therefore leaves out notable parts of their story. Labels are influential and it is therefore vital that we are aware of their usage (Lee & Nerghes 2018). ‘We are Here’ provides a unique perspective of undocumented activism and ‘acts of citizenship’ from a specific and identifiable ‘category’ of refugees. As a result, this research possesses greater external validity and can be potentially representative of similar situations in other countries where there are also examples of migrant activist groups containing failed asylum seekers. Notwithstanding the potential for increased external validity and the importance of transparency in qualitative research, the issue of generalization is still prevalent. Therefore I will make the case that the theoretical findings of this research seek to generalize a theory, not a population (Bryman 2012, p. 406). The quality of the theoretical analysis then becomes important along with the transparency of the process.

**Data analysis strategy**

In order to achieve a quality theoretical analysis, I have decided to adopt a theoretical thematic analysis technique. This methodology can be seen in a lot of research, but is not explicitly referenced. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this denies the agency of the researcher in actively identifying and selecting patterns or themes as opposed to ‘discovering’ what is already there (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 80). Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns that are dominant across multiple types of texts and coding them in order to analyze and interpret various meanings within a qualitative data set (ibid., 81). The flexibility within this approach is attractive because it can be applied within numerous theoretical fields and is not bound to a certain epistemology (ibid., p. 78). It can therefore be molded to fit various research designs and research questions (Nowell et al. 2017, p. 2). While this technique is flexible, it is often
considered to be vague and lead to inconsistencies. This disadvantage is addressed in a number of articles, which explicitly outline a step-by-step process, which seeks to facilitate the development of well-defined tools when applying a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006; Nowell et al. 2017; Attride-Stirling 2001). “Consistency and cohesion can be promoted by applying and making explicit an epistemological position that can coherently underpin the study’s empirical claims” (Holloway & Todres, 2003, cited in Nowell et al., p. 2). I will use these three studies in order to make explicit my plans for utilizing thematic analysis.

For this research, thematic analysis is preferred because I will be utilizing both an inductive and deductive approach as discussed above. Thematic analysis in contrast to other methodological approaches, such as grounded theory, can involve both and codes can be based on specific analytical interests (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 83). There is limited consensus on when the right time is to engage with literature, although some argue that engagement before analysis allows the researcher to become more “sensitized” and therefore produce a more wholesome and thorough analysis (Tuckett 2005, cited in Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 86). In order to allow my conceptual interests to drive my analysis, I must first make explicit the specific decisions I have made before coding. Because my coding framework will be initially theory driven, I will be conducting a ‘theoretical’ thematic analysis, as opposed to inductive thematic analysis. It is important to have a good code, as this may combat potential consistency issues often prevalent in qualitative data analysis (ibid., p. 6). My specific coding framework will be discussed below.

I will also be utilizing a combination of semantic and latent levels of analysis, although I will focus primarily on the interpretative level, as suggested by Braun & Clarke (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 84). The explicit or semantic level evolves from description to interpretation, as patterns are summarized and then theorized in order to address their meanings, “often in relation to previous literature” (ibid., p. 84). The interpretative or latent level involves the development of themes as interpretation itself, and can sometimes intersect with thematic discourse analysis (ibid., 84). This takes on the constructionist paradigm, “where broader assumptions, structure and/or meanings are theorized as underpinning what is actually articulated in the data” (Burr 1995, cited in
Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 85). Epistemologically, this means that thematic meanings are “socially produced and reproduced” within broader contexts and “structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided” (ibid., p. 85). The development of my research questions involved preexisting conceptions about citizenship and undocumented activism, which also guided my data collection. It is important to make these assumptions and preexisting conceptions explicit (ibid., p. 80).

I will now outline the specific steps I have taken in my data analysis. I will draw on both Attride-Stirling (2001) and Braun and Clarke (2006) in this outline, as both provide useful and detailed tools for examining qualitative data and developing themes. “It is important to recognize that qualitative analysis guidelines are exactly that – they are not rules, and, following the basic precepts, will need to be applied flexibly to fit the research questions and data” (Patton, 1990, cited in Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 86).

Phase 1 involves transcribing or re-reading data in order to process initial ideas and become familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 87). This is described as “a key phase of analysis,” or an ‘interpretative act’ (Bird 2005, p. 227, cited in Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 88).

Phase 2 involves coding the material. “There are a number of ways of doing this, but as a summary, it tends to be done on the basis of the theoretical interests guiding the research questions, on the basis of salient issues that arise in the text itself, or on the basis of both” (Attride-Stirling 2001, p. 390). These codes will be less broad than the themes (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 89). This will involve the use of a coding framework based on pre-established criteria and segments that are of interest to the researcher (Attride-Stirling 2001, p. 391). Data extracts in the text can be given more than one code (ibid., p. 392).

Phase 3 involves identifying themes. Codes are collated into salient themes. Rereading the data with significant themes in mind facilitates this process. Themes may be generated deductively or inductively (Nowell et al., 2006, p. 8). While the significance of certain themes related to the types of data may be significant in future research, my research is not concerned with mediums. Therefore, the criterion for the selection was based on the explanatory value in line with my coding framework and theoretical preconditions, not medium or medium diversity.
Phase 4 involves refining themes. Themes must be molded so that they are both specific to one idea and broad in order to encapsulate different parts of the texts (Attride-Stirling 2001, p. 392). This is a largely interpretative step as the incorporation of various text segments will lead to the refinement of themes. “Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 91). This can be broken down into two distinct step: first, reviewing the coded text segments for each theme and ensuring that they form a coherent pattern; second, considering whether your candidate themes reflect the entire data set by rereading the entire data set, determining if each theme works in relation to the entire data set, and potentially coding new data segments that were missed in Phase 2 (ibid., p. 91). “To some extent, what counts as ‘accurate representation’ depends on your theoretical and analytic approach” (ibid., p. 91).

Phase 5 involves creating thematic networks. This could mean creating a visual representation of identified codes in order to organize potential themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 89). First, assemble themes into logical groupings. “These groupings will become the thematic networks. Decisions about how to group themes will be made on the basis of content and, when appropriate, on theoretical grounds” (Attride-Stirling 2001, p. 392). Second, thematic codes become Basic Themes. Third, create Global Themes by identifying the main claims or assertions throughout the Organizing Themes. This is the main meaning or the core point. Third, create groupings of Basic Themes, based on shared issues within Global Themes. Lastly, refine themes again in order to make sure that themes reflect the data and the data contributes to the themes (ibid., p. 393, capitalization used in original text). “Thematic analyses, and thematic networks, are equally applicable in analyses with a focus on commonalities, differences or contradictions, and it is up to the researcher to identify themes in a manner that is appropriate to her or his specific theoretical interests” (ibid., p. 395).

Phase 6 involves describing the thematic networks. “Each of the Organizing Themes has been explored fully, elaborating on the signification of the Global Theme, illustrating it with Basic Themes and supporting the interpretation with text segments” (Attride-Stirling 2001, p. 401). With thematic networks as the tools, the researcher must explore the themes that have discovered, describing the contents and identifying patterns.
This is useful for the reader as it is meant to, “facilitate the presentation and understanding of the material” (ibid., p. 393). The most important and principal themes should be made apparent in an explicit and succinct manner.

Phase 7 involves interpreting the patterns. This last step is highly analytical, and involves returning to the main research questions and answering them with arguments based on the patterns and themes which emerged through a thematic analysis of the texts (ibid., p. 394).

Following these steps should create more clarity within this qualitative research. The next section outlines the data set that will be applied to this methodology.

**Data set**

In my selection of the ‘We are Here’ collective, I have adopted a critical case sampling technique. As my unit of analysis, the group was selected because it is, “a crucial case that permits a logical inference about the phenomenon of interest—for example, a case might be chosen precisely because it is anticipated that it might allow a theory to be tested” (Bryman 2012, p. 419). In order to obtain sufficient data for my analysis, I will rely on multiple primary sources, specifically, one-on-one interviews, and information from the ‘We are Here’ website. My chosen methodology, thematic analysis, allows for a diverse data set, including interviews or, “a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning” (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 86). These primary sources were not randomly selected, but instead chosen because of their perceived relevance for my research questions (Bryman 2012, p. 418). These sources provide me with multiple angles from which to build my argument and suggest a form of stratified purposive sampling, or “sampling of usually typical cases or individuals within subgroups of interest” (Bryman 2012, p. 419). Additionally, utilizing spokespeople and having a website are means of creating visibilities and mobilizing support, both of which are important objectives of the ‘We are Here’ collective and therefore significant points of analysis. These data sources have been used extensively in previous research that looks at undocumented migrant activism and citizenship. Interviews are most common, and often considered the most useful (Chimienti & Solomos 2011) although interviews are often supplemented with publications and internal documents from the movement in
order to triangulate the data and strengthen arguments (Swerts 2017; Baća 2017; Leitner & Strunk 2014). I will now discuss my specific data collection strategies further.

I have conducted two semi-structured interviews with the most prominent members of the ‘We are Here’ group in Amsterdam. Although I do not predict that any of the information I am disclosing about these two people should in any way be harmful to their livelihood in Amsterdam, I have decided to not include their names in order to protect their privacy. My first interviewee will be called Interviewee A, and my second interviewee will be called Interviewee B. Both are Sudanese refugees who have been ‘members’ of the group for many years, Interviewee A since it’s inception. While Interviewee A no longer lives with the group and is now less involved since receiving his asylum status and papers within the past year, Interviewee B still lives at the ‘We are Here’ location and is a leader in organizing it’s current events. Interviewee A is the most active on the group’s social media page and had been the group’s spokesperson for many years. I contacted Interviewee A through Facebook and organized an interview. I was introduced to Interviewee B onsite through the recommendation of Interviewee A, as he is another prominent and experienced figure with significant knowledge of the group’s activities. These two people are the most valuable to interview because each have years of experience in the group and are deeply familiar with its ideas, goals, and history. The two interviews took place at the current location of ‘We are Here’, in Uilenstede in Amstelveen. Interviewee A informed me that he preferred to meet interviewers at the group’s locations, as it provided an accurate image of the collective, which is often tarnished or misunderstood by those who report on or research them. Interviewing at the location was also in my best interest as it provided me with some observational data from which I could contextualize my interview data.

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured, as I prepared several questions related to my research questions, but often improvised and pressed certain issues based on where the conversation was going and what I was interested in. The outline of my prepared questions is located in Appendix 1. Semi-structured interviews are useful in qualitative research methods because questions can be driven by specific research questions while also leaving space for the researcher to adjust the course of the interview for various reasons, and the interviewee to raise additional issues that they find valuable.
(Bryman 2012, p. 472). In my attempt to identify ‘acts of citizenship’ within the ‘We are Here’ group, it was important that my data collection strategy be based on principles that could help me recognize ‘acts of citizenship’ within the group, while also leaving room for the emergence of new codes. This is related to my coding strategy based on a ‘theoretical’ thematic analysis methodology described above.

Although I hoped to conduct more interviews in order to produce more data, Interviewee B informed me that other current members were relatively new to the group. These failed asylum seekers could therefore only provide me with information regarding their personal experiences as refugees and with the Dutch asylum system. While these may be useful for individuals researching OOPS’s in Holland or refugee experiences traveling from their home country’s, for the sake of my research concerning undocumented activism, these interviews would prove fruitless. An additional challenge when interviewing these two ‘We are Here’ leaders, was the language barrier. Although both spoke English well, there were sometimes misunderstandings about questions or the specific direction I wished to take the conversation. Though I often tried to counteract this through follow-up questions, I sometimes had trouble communicating my point. Additionally, some words are unintelligible on my recording due to strong accents. In my transcripts I have tried to make educated interpretations about certain words, while others I simply indicated as [unintelligible]. I also recognized that I would be asking questions about topics, which may be difficult to discuss due to the trauma they may have inflicted. Before each interview, I indicated that my questions were flexible and that the interviewee had the option to move on if he didn’t want to answer. I also did not press issues if I sensed a negative, emotional response.

In addition to helping mold my interview guide, the ‘We are Here’ website (wijzijnhier.org) is used as a data item in my data set. The data I chose to use from the website, were items that were in English and that were posted by the group themselves, not supporters or academics. Though the website featured news articles, academic literature, and videos made by third parties, these were not useful and were not coded because they did not come directly from the group. Specifically, the documents from the ‘We are Here’ website that I chose to analyze fell into four categories: event
announcements/invitations, informational documents, letters and requests. All documents available in English on the ‘We are Here’ website were coded. In total, 53 webpages from the ‘We are Here’ website were included in my data set. Pictures and videos were not included because analyzing visual evidence requires a different analytical procedure, which is not in the scope of this research paper but may prove interesting for further research.

Utilizing website data is useful in qualitative research for multiple reasons. Triangulation, or the use of multiple sources of data, can increase a research projects’ credibility (Bryman 2012, p. 392). While this online data can be seen as less genuine as it may be edited or redacted, these specific channels will provide my analysis with more depth and a more complete contextualization. Additionally, documents are non-reactive meaning that, “because they have not been created specifically for the purposes of social research, the possibility of a reactive effect can be largely discounted as a limitation on the validity of data” (ibid., p. 543). Including the ‘We are Here’ website information was also useful in my own research because it provided context. Context is important because when applying ‘acts of citizenship’ to a methodology, it is essential to understand the history that led to certain acts (Andrijasevic 2013, p. 59). This allows for further detection of how a group identifies with each other and comes to effectively express their agenda and “claims to rights” (ibid., p. 59). The information provided will offer context from which I can connect actions to meanings analyzed from the interviews. Within thematic analysis, websites and online communities are considered legitimate forms of data (Bryman 2012, p. 657). There is also a basis for the synthesis of multiple data sources in multiple relevant, recent journal articles, which discuss undocumented activism and ‘acts of citizenship’ (Swerts 2017; Baća 2017). But, when referring to websites and online communities it is important to refer to the date that it was consulted, as these pages often change (Bryman 2012, p. 657). Studying the actions and goals of ‘We are Here’ is not only based on the advantages that these multiple perspectives will give me, but also the accessibility of the sources.

By utilizing a ‘theoretical’ thematic analysis I will be filling a methodological gap. While other articles have utilized ‘acts of citizenship’ in order to analyze migrant activist groups, many have failed to explicitly outline their methodology. By
approaching this study with the utmost transparency, I hope to provide clarity with regard to applying ‘acts of citizenship’ towards qualitative research designs. I have outlined my data analysis technique and the reasons for the choices I have made. In the next chapter, will now apply these methods to the data set in order to operationalize my research.
Operationalization

Creating a coding framework

In this section I will outline how I plan to incorporate my conceptual framework into a comprehensive and elegant methodology and allow it to guide my research. It is essential that I outline my assumptions and make explicit the decisions I’ve made before and during coding. With a ‘theoretical’ thematic approach, this study will allow the explicit principles of ‘acts of citizenship’ outlined by Isin (2009) to be an integral part of the analysis. Although grounded in preexisting conditions, the analytical technique also allows for the emergence of other issues through inductive coding practices (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, p. 83). According to Boyatzis (1998), a prominent figure in thematic approach literature, a theme is “a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis 1998, p. 161). The prevalence and usefulness of a theme is based on the researcher’s discretion (Attride-Stirling 2001, p. 395).

When utilizing a coding framework, or a template approach, some of the coding and theme organization happens a priori, based sometimes on initial observations within the data, but for this analysis it will be constructed from the conceptual framework (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, p. 83). The coding framework is then used as a data management and organization tool when dissecting the data. For this research, a coding framework was developed based on Isin’s theoretical concept of ‘acts of citizenship’ (Isin 2008, Isin 2009). This allows for the examination of data from this particular perspective, which will help to evaluate and analyze the acts of ‘We are Here.’

In order to describe the coding framework I devised, it is first important to revisit the discussion of ‘acts of citizenship’ and relate the concept to a thematic analysis approach. According to Isin, the investigation of ‘acts of citizenship’ is bound to the investigation of new actors, scales, and sites, which are “constantly shifting aspects of struggles over rights.” The first principle of understanding ‘acts of citizenship’ discussed by Isin is “interpreting them through their grounds and consequences.” (Isin 2009, p. 381). The grounds and consequences of the act are the scenes or performances it creates, and the scene can be described through the analysis of new sites and scales (ibid., p. 381).
Actors therefore cannot be defined before analyzing sites and scales because actors emerge through acts and acts create new sites and scales (ibid., p. 371). Therefore this definition provides the sequence of my analysis in order to understand how ‘We are Here’ enacts themselves as citizens, the struggles through which this occurs, and how they rupture notions of citizenship and potentially transform the institution. In sum, this approach implies working backwards chronologically, from what is apparent and more obvious as having been created by the ‘act of citizenship’ towards an analysis of the acts themselves and emergent strategies and identifications. Therefore, I will first search for scenes within my texts and organize them into a coding framework based on the sites and scale they transforms.

Sites and scales constituted the coding framework, and correspond with Phase 2 of thematic analysis. The categories of sites and scales were based on Isin’s definition of ‘acts of citizenship’ as outlined above. Each code category seeks to describe an aspect of the scenes generated by acts, namely the field of contestation and the scope of applicability appropriate to that field (Isin 2009, p. 370). They are then useful in the interpretation of the act. Codes within the code category will be inductively identified through Isin’s outline of each concept. Identifying sites and scales will help to answer my first research question: How does the ‘We are Here’ group enact themselves as citizens? The answer to this question will come in the form of acts. Sites and scales help to organize and describe the scene where those act have taken place. While it is important to check the reliability of the codes, I determined that this was superfluous given the simplicity of beginning with only two code categories (Boyatzis 1998, cited in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, p. 85).

**Coding**

The predetermined code categories were applied to Interview A first, inductively creating specific codes as the process continued. It soon became apparent that there was consistency in the site and scope codes developed. Interview B was coded as well as the documents from the ‘We are Here’ website, using my developed coding framework. The documents were extracted from the website on May 15, 2019. Any changes to the information after that date was not included. The software NVivo was used in order to
code the data set for efficiency and organization reasons as well as in order to use its exploratory functions. Notes were taken throughout the coding process about potential acts and potential Global Themes. In the end, nine codes were created for the code category site and ten codes were created for the code category scale. The frequency of a site or scale was determined in NVivo based on how many times it was referenced. This was useful in creating a hierarchy of sites extracted from the data, which may be useful in analysis. This is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Scales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Squatted house</td>
<td>The group (‘We are Here’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government or state</td>
<td>Supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic place</td>
<td>Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception centers</td>
<td>Failed asylum seeker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asylum institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Coded sites and scales based on coding framework.

Before moving onto phase 3, infrequently used codes were combined with others in order to streamline the analysis. Reception centers and Holland were combined with Government or state because Holland is the state and runs asylum institutions such as reception centers. Additionally, the scale Failed Asylum Seekers was combined with the Group because ‘We are Here’ is made up of failed asylum seekers. This left me with seven sites and seven scales.

In order to accomplish phase 3, codes were collated into themes based on explanatory value. A useful theme is defined in this research as frequently referenced sites and their corresponding applicable scales. This is based on Isin’s definitions of sites and scales which defines sites as, “fields of contestation around which certain issues,
interests, stakes as well as themes, concepts and objects assemble,” and scales as, “scopes of applicability that are appropriate to these fields of contestation” (Isin 2009, p. 370). Sites were then cross-referenced with the frequency of scale references using a Node Matrix Coding Search in NVivo. This allowed me to see which scales were most frequently coded for each site. The top three or four scales were considered significant. This coding matrix can be seen in Table 2. Relevant scales are listed in hierarchical order based on how frequently they were applied to a site. This will provide an informal guide from whom I can deviate based on analytical preferences. Phase 4 involved reviewing text segments which applied both to a specific site and a corresponding scale, making sure that they accurately represent a field of contestation and reflect a potential transformation of actors into citizens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Squatted house</th>
<th>Government or state</th>
<th>Street Networks</th>
<th>Online Support</th>
<th>Symbolic Place Support</th>
<th>Court Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Group State</td>
<td>Group State Local</td>
<td>Group Support Local</td>
<td>Group Support Local</td>
<td>Individual State Local</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Site and corresponding Scales Matrix Results

For Phase 5, sites and their corresponding scales were transformed into Basic Themes. As the sites and scales of struggles, Basic Themes provide an overview of the data and place each individual code within a context. Individually coded extracts became scenes or performances through which acts are actualized. This provides us with one aspect of the investigation of citizenship, namely it’s explicit elements (Isin 2009, p. 378). Next, Global Themes were created based on the claims that were being articulated within these sites. This is in accordance with the first principle of investigating acts, which states that acts should be interpreted through their consequences, as well as the third principle which suggests theorizing acts by recognizing “that acts of citizenship do not need to be founded in law or enacted in the name of law” (Isin 2008, p. 39). Acts should instead question the law and challenge which rights are appropriate for which
actor. The Global Themes or claimed rights include: the right to collective action, the right to security and the right to solidarity. Some sites were used multiple times because claims to multiple rights were present within scenes. The distribution of the Basic Themes is shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right (Global Theme):</th>
<th>Collective Action</th>
<th>Security</th>
<th>Solidarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site (Basic Theme):</td>
<td>Squatted House, Online, Street</td>
<td>Squatted House, Government or state, Court</td>
<td>Symbolic place, Network, Online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Global Themes and Basic Themes.

Next, acts were theorized within Global Themes by interpreting the acts that create sites and scales. This interpretative step goes beyond looking at individual codes within a site and instead focuses on which acts produce claims to rights. Within these sites of contestation, acts create claim-making subjects. This is in line with Isin’s second principle of theorizing acts of citizenship, which “recognizes that acts produce actors that become answerable to justice against injustice” (Isin 2008, p. 39). This is based on the idea that sites and scales are formed through the struggle for rights in which actors, through acts, claim rights. These acts are discussed in the first chapter of my analysis.

The next chapter of this research will investigate the data I have collected in line with the Global Themes I have created by utilizing thematic analysis and ‘acts of citizenship.’ I will describe my data set, consistent with Phase 6 of thematic analysis. Using Global, Organizing, and Basic Themes to organize this description and data extracts to support them, I will describe patterns I have identified and themes I have discovered. These patterns and themes take the form of rights, sites and scales, and acts. Within this first empirical chapter, I will provide an outline of the data set by describing each global theme I have constructed. Global Themes are expanded upon through the use of data extracts (scenes), basic themes (sites and scales) and organizing themes (acts). The second section analyzes the transformation of modes and forms of the acts. This includes interpreting the patterns created and returning to my research questions (Phase
7). New modes and forms of conduct will be identified and interpreted as new strategies or orientations of being political through which “beings enact...modes of being with each other” (Isin 2008, p. 37). The emergence of the activist citizen and an evaluation of the potential transformation of citizenship as a result will be addressed.
Analysis

Data Results

The first two questions guiding this research are: How does the ‘We are Here’ group enact themselves as citizens? What sorts of struggles for rights entail this enactment? Answering these questions requires an investigative and more semantic level of approach, keeping in mind that the formation of themes and groupings has already demanded some interpretation. Significant sites and scales were identified, based on frequency and explanatory value, and were renamed as Basic Themes. Basic Themes were then collated based on claims to rights that became evident through the specific site of contestation. Sites and scales were sometimes duplicated when there were multiple claims to rights articulated. Within each Global Theme or claim, acts were identified as Organizing Themes based on specific issues dealt with within each site. This analysis of the data results will identify and extrapolate the acts that have emerged.

This section is organized into three parts, each highlighting a specific right of citizenship that is claimed by ‘We are Here.’ These claims will be examined through the sites and scales of contestation they shape, and the acts involved in their enactment. The first section will discuss the claim to the right to collective action. The second section will discuss the claim to the right to security. The third section will discuss the claim to the right to solidarity. These three claims relate to each other in several ways but are differentiated based on the acts through which they are articulated. It is important to keep in mind that studying how subjects become claimants through ‘acts of citizenship’ involves looking at everyday actions, which may not be explicitly political in nature (Isin 2008, p. 17). Through creative breaks from habitus, “subjects become claimants” and thereby transform how citizenship is commonly thought to exist (ibid., p. 17). This section will examine those creative breaks.
Right to collective action

In enacting the right to collective action, ‘We are Here’ is positioning themselves within the political sphere as opposed to remaining passive outsiders. In claiming access to the political, ‘We are Here’ is acting on a right that they do not possess because as undocumented individuals they are subjects. But, according the Isin, this political space is malleable and does not entail a specific place or specific actors (Isin 2009, p. 270). Sites created by this claim to collective action, are shaped by scenes, which reflect an inability of individuals to act through formal channels. Scenes were created within three main sites: the squatted house, online and the street. Each site is created through the struggle for the right to collective action.

The squatted house

Within the site of the squatted house, new actors emerge through acts of squatting. When asserting the right to collective action, the squatted house becomes a site where the ‘We are Here’ group can be political. The scope of applicability, is principally the group itself as the squatted house enables members to be together and remain politically active by advocating for themselves as a group. The squatted house also becomes the physical location of protest when evictions are announced. By occupying the house past their eviction date, ‘We are Here’ enacts a form of protest, in which they contest the state policies that force them to relocate. After the announcement of an eviction, ‘We are Here’ held a group meeting at their squatted location and posted the conclusions of their discussion on their website:

The general meeting of Sunday November 12th has permanently decided the inhabitants will not leave the house voluntarily. They call all sympathisers of their movement to come in great numbers to their house to support their peaceful resistance.
We do not want anymore pseudo-solutions, we want accomodation! Therefore, when they will come to evict us, we will not leave voluntarily! We stay! We have no other place to go. (Steun Wij Zijn Hier tegen ontruiming kraakpand, 2017)

The act of squatting enables this performance by making the squatted house a location of political struggle towards justice. The squatted house becomes a symbol of the group’s claim to the right to collective action and organization in its prevention of depoliticalization (Kalir 2017, p. 70). The group strength and community amongst
refugees enabled by the squatted house stand in direct contrast with the dispersal activities of the state.

The Dutch government’s motivation to disperse ‘We are Here’ through the eviction of their squatted houses, highlights the challenge that this site of contestation represents to the stability of the perceived political order. In refusing to hand over their location, ‘We are Here’ challenges existing scripts where the state is placed at the center and citizenship is tied to expected behavior. Instead, the group responds to emergency with innovation and in doing so creates a decidedly contested site for citizenship. Additionally, by consistently placing priority on the eviction of members from squatted houses, the state implements a strategy of acknowledgement meant to invoke disappearance and ultimately disregard. While these buildings are empty and remain empty after the ‘We are Here’ group has been evicted, it is the potential that these locations have for strengthening the political presence of the group that also threatens the state. As the site of press conferences, meetings, and various activities, the squatted house becomes a concrete representation of the political power that the group could have. This is confirmed in my interview with Interviewee B, who addresses the competitive housing market in Amsterdam.

What I think is, everything matters, [it’s interest] also matters for everything. If I our situation has been active, they have to be respond[ing], and they changing for the things. Because every year, every month, there’s another thing. I’ll give an example about squatting in the house, how the owner they have the authority, about the [exposing] of the contract between the [candidate] and the housing owners and the housing rules and more than--every year more than five hundred or one thousand [unintelligible word 0:16:38], Dutch citizen in Amsterdam couldn’t get a house, but there’s many buildings empty, but there is no one living, they only make like a, what do you call it? Antikraak. (Appendix 2, Interviewee B, p. 99)

This quote illustrates the priorities of the Dutch government. Antikraak is a program that provides cheap, temporary housing in abandoned buildings whose owners could decide to sell or renovate it at anytime, subsequently ending the temporary housing. Antikraak means anti-squatting in Dutch (I am Expat n.d.). These efforts show that while the Dutch government is willing to put effort into preventing squatting by creating programs which limit the choices of undocumented groups, they are unwilling to put effort into preventing
squatting by funding programs which may provide legitimate housing for the group who needs it. Additionally, in a court case attempting to challenge an eviction scheduled for Tuesday, July 8, 2014, the judge cited vague plans for maintenance as the reason that ‘We are Here’ could not occupy the building, along with evaluations of proportionality which placed the interests of the owner above those of the squatters. The judgment placed a large number of migrants on the streets, while the building likely remained empty (*The end of the Vluchtmarkt*, 2014). This suggests an unwillingness of the state to acknowledge the group within a space unless they are being evicted. Instead it provides a confirmation of strategies of depoliticization. Squatting as a form of protest becomes not only an example of political collective action but also a site where citizenship as an institution of domination becomes prevalent (Isin 2009, p. 383).

**Online**

Through activity online, ‘We are Here’ speaks with one unified voice about the struggles they face as undocumented failed asylum seekers. As a site of struggle, the ‘We are Here’ website and their online presence in general emerged through acts of online mobilization and communication. Through disclosing information and attempting to involve the community, the country, and the world in their political struggles, the website became a platform became a creative solution to issues of accessibility and reach. The site online, created a stage from which the group could self-organize and mobilize supporters towards their cause. After being questioned about methods the group utilizes to spread their political message, Interviewee A stated the importance of having a “strategic plan” that involved social media:

The strategic plan which – resources as well, always active, helps you to encourage others and creating links to the civilians and other activism and organizations, the whole society’s network. Using social media as a way of reach out to people. So I have this kind of this strategic plan. (Appendix 2, Interview A, p. 74)

The website has been most frequently used over the past seven years to distribute announcements about and invitations for various demonstrations or events, often immediately following the notice of a location eviction or an impending deportation. This is an efficient and effective way of disclosing important information without the stability of a permanent location and consistent members. This enables the
group to act collectively and interact with their community despite their constantly moving location and time-sensitive needs or announcements. In an announcement published on May 13, 2017, the group mobilized support for a demonstration against the deportation of a ‘We are Here’ member to Sudan. “We will be active the coming days in the streets and online to protest against this deportation. Please come and join us and show solidarity” (Call for demonstration against deportation of Sudanese Nuba, 2017). In doing so, the ‘We are Here’ group could communicate directly with their supporters quickly and efficiently and enact real political change. On May 16, 2017, ‘We are Here’ announced via their website that the deportation of their fellow group member had been cancelled thanks to their timely mobilization and actions (Deportation cancelled, 2017).

**Street**

As undocumented activists, self-organization and beginning constitute acts in which the right to political participation is articulated. The streets of Amsterdam are the site that these acts transform through demonstrations and protests. Similar to the squatted house, the streets become locations where protests of exclusive asylum policy occur, involving the ‘We are Here’ group, supporters, and the local community. Marching and demonstration transforms the streets into sites where the struggle for collective action occurs and represents the gap that OOPSs exist in. “After a day of relaxation we’ll march along the beach. As we walk between land and sea, between no welcome in the Netherlands and no welcome or safety in any place on the world, we’ll visualize the impossible impasse that the refugees are in” (We are everywhere, 2013). The accessibility and openness of streets as a site of contestation in some ways manages to blur the line between documented and undocumented individuals. Streets are places where OOPSs can exist in between the danger of their home countries and the criminality of a squatted home or detention. In other ways streets represent the deadlock that exists within the asylum policy process, where OOPSs are non-existent, but also illegal and often susceptible to police checks. This observation is corroborated by Interviewee B when they discussing the beginnings of ‘We are Here’:

Also, this is very dangerous because that is an example, that’s the time that nobody can welcome refugees in their home, who have been kick out of the camp.
They have no right to walk in the street, police have to check the streets and check their--.” (Appendix 2, Interviewee B, p. 87).

An OOPS thus has no right to be anywhere. Alternatively, through protest and demonstration the street turns into a site of empowerment and strength. ‘We are Here’ was aware of and acknowledges this empowerment when they wrote: “We saw a new phenomena: demonstrations organised by refugees,” in a reflective post on the second anniversary of the group’s formation” (Our moves so far, 2014). The new phenomena and ‘irresponsibility’ of contesting the law in a space where they are criminalized constitutes a rupture. Returning to a definition of citizenship, which involves domination and empowerment, the tension created on the streets through the assertion of domination by the police and the empowerment through the struggle for collective action of ‘We are Here’ enables the emergence of new actors as activist citizens (Isin 2009, p. 371).

Interestingly, it can also be a place of celebration, in that it literally represents where the group has come from and the progress they’ve made. On August 20, 2016, the ‘We are Here’ website announced a demonstration or “march from the Vluchtgemeente to the World Garden of the Protestant Diaconie, where it all started. We can’t go back” (We are Here is 4, 2016). Politically, the street represents the beginning or ground zero. Being on the street and recognizing it as a site of contestation creates the political message of progress around which the group can politically organize. But, when members are forced back onto the street after an eviction, it again becomes a site of struggle and is converted back to it regressive imagery. “The refugees call for support to be with them when they go on the streets today at 17.00. For tonight they will need inflatable mattresses, sleeping bags, blankets and rain cover supplies” (Wij Zijn Hier verlaat de Havenstraat, 2014).

**Right to security**

Within various sites, the right to security is claimed. This is a broad right which also encompasses a right to a residence, a stable or normal life, or the right to livelihood as these rights can come as the result of a right to security. These rights are frequently attached to given notions of citizenship, although through creative acts, ‘We are Here’ positions themselves as individuals with the right to security despite being undocumented. Rights to security may be confused with human rights or universal
rights, especially since ‘We are Here’ sometimes explicitly references human rights as
the basis for their demands. But, the acts performed through the various sites described
below (the squatted house, government, court) all exist within the sovereign notion of
citizenship and stem from scenes, which have spatiotemporal distinctiveness. Therefore,
while ‘We are Here’ may orient themselves towards universal rights, the acts through
which new sites and scales are transformed, are produced by a struggle for domestic and
tangible rights. These acts operate in opposition to exclusion.

**Squatted House**

Within the squatted house, the acts of inhabiting and management means treating
the house as permanent instead of temporary or illegitimate. Inhabiting in this case is
differentiated from occupation, which implies using a building as opposed to living in it.
Acting with the mindset that a location is permanent even though it may be temporary
requires a certain amount of care and organization as would go into creating and
maintaining a home. Themes of care and maintenance existed throughout the interview
conducted Interviewee B. Interviewee B addressed ways in which the group attempts to
take responsibility for their actions:

Now, the work of the government could be [form full], so we try to fill the gap, to
take responsibility, volunteer, environmental—voluntary environmental safety, in
the sense of nothing to something, to do something. [0:06:09] To make sure that
no one is sleeping in the street, and make sure that every our brother [only have
support], and make sure that we keep the house visible to create activities and
keep it clean and try also to take responsibility like it’s our own property. To
keep the house in order. (Appendix 2, Interview B, p. 88)

In treating the squatted house as “their property,” ‘We are Here’ creates an atmosphere of
stability, through scenes that constitute a ‘normal life.’ Nevertheless, because the group
clearly acknowledges that it is not their place, hence the statement, “like it’s our
property,” the act of inhabiting does not come from a place of unawareness, but from the
aim to behave within a system of responsibilities and obligations. Furthermore, the act
maintains that despite the constant uncertainty surrounding their physical housing, ‘We
are Here’ has recognized the Netherlands in general as their home. In doing so, ‘We are
Here’ has taken on the role of citizens by assuming obligations or responsibilities and
consequently claiming rights. “We call for the city of Amsterdam to take responsibility
for its inhabitants,” is thus a similar rewording of, “we need a permanent place to start a normal life” (Wij Zijn Hier persconferentie 2018; We are Here wants a dialogue for a solution, not another eviction 2016). In accordance with the notion of citizenship as containing rights and responsibilities, ‘We are Here’ asserts rights through acts that assume responsibilities. (Isin 2009, p. 372).

The scope of the field of contestation also includes supporters. The maintenance of the location where the group presently squats can be interpreted as providing a positive image of OOPSs as ‘suitable’ additions to Dutch society. In a letter to “readers, supporters & followers,” requesting supplies for bathroom products, the group stated that, “it’s been a big fight for trying to keep our place liveable and we know that sometimes we have to do our best to make it as cleaner as possible” (Benodigheden Vluchtopvang...@Linnaeushof 4, Amsterdam 2014). The act of inhabiting also becomes applicable on an individual scale. While living in bad and uncertain conditions, tensions between individuals rise. An announcement on the ‘We are Here’ website on August 25, 2014 announced the death of a member after a quarrel broke out at their location. The group attributed this to rising tensions, uncertainty and “daily stress” (Wij Zijn Hier heeft een familielid verloren-R.I.P. Nasir Gulid 2014). While this is an extreme attribution to a lack of inhabiting, it is useful in suggesting that tensions amongst individuals could be mitigated through attentiveness towards individual obligations in the sense of acting towards security and stability. Interviewee B made this claim when discussing the necessity of fixing what is in front of you to survive:

If you went to your work, you have to work. If you went to school you have to study. Why you pay for your study? So this is our situation, I am here, I don’t have life, I have to breath, yes I have to do something to breath in a positive way. (Appendix 2, Interview B, p. 92)

Equally, inhabiting also creates an environment that facilitates celebration. Locally and within the network of supporters that the group has accumulated over time, a squatted house provides the group with visibility and a location to host events or celebrations. The website posting from July 17, 2014 is an invitation from the ‘We are Here’ to members of the local community and supporters to celebrate the breaking of the fast (Feest uitnodiging @Vluchtopvang, Linnaeushof 4 Amsterdam!!!, 2014). It provides a home base from which the group can be together, find purpose, and organize.
**Government and state**

The government and state become sites of contestation through the act of opposition and substantiation. As OOPSs, ‘We are Here’ does not have the legal capacity to express their issues with policy that is forced upon them. Active citizenship pathways such as, voting are not available (Isin 2009, p. 380). But, through political actions, acts of opposition and substantiation create a sense of political belonging within the space of governmental and state policy. Creatively navigating these channels of the political space constitutes claiming the right to security because it is enacted through struggles for livelihood.

Much of the need for substantiation and opposition comes from government and state policy that works to discount or manipulate the stories and needs of OOPSs. When asylum institutions do not believe applications or fail to fully investigate cases, this affects the well being of refugees directly. When asked about his encounters with the Dutch asylum policy process, Interviewee A described their emotional reactions:

> My experience with that, really, it wasn’t a good experience. It wasn’t a good experience. Like sometimes, you come from really from serious problem behind and especially when it’s a war and you still have that trauma. On the other side they did not believe you but even sometimes they create some like false accusation to block you, not to receive you’re right. And it hurts, it hurts, it hurts a lot. It hurts, it was very negative experience, not positive. (Appendix 2, Interview A, p. 67)

The unwillingness of state institutions to believe asylum seekers creates conditions of instability. ‘We are Here’ attributes these actions to the government’s explicit motivation to manipulate public opinion, by purposefully exploiting the instability. Negative imagery is perceived as a tool used by politicians in order to make an example of refugees and deter the arrival of more refugees (*Wij Zijn Hier persconferentie* 2018). This is also the case within the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND). “Sometimes we cannot get ‘status’ because the IND attempt not to believe our reasons for fleeing our countries. And sometimes the IND does not take enough time to study one’s procedures” (*Wij Zijn Hier persconferentie* 2018). Despite lacking a lawful, domestic political role, ‘We are Here’ acts as citizens in their opposition to specific policy that affects them or ignores them. As an example, the group decided to not leave a squatted
van den Helder 45

house on November 14, 2017 because they recognized eviction as a policy of deterrence (Steun wij zijn hier tegen ontruiming kraakpand 2017). They instead wish to “create and have an open dialogue with you [the municipality], the Dutch people, politicians, the Mayor and the IND again in order to find a solution” (We are Here wants a dialogue for a solution, not another eviction 2016). Claiming a position within the political space presumes an entitlement to the right to security where OOPSs have the ability to pressure the government and negotiate their own terms.

Court

‘We are Here’ has been involved in several court cases over the past seven years. The scope of applicability for the court is not only the group itself, but also OOPSs in general and the state. The site is transformed through acts of appealing to justice and entitling. Although the court is an institutionalized route for being an active citizen, it is the symbolic idea of crossing legal boundaries in order to be heard which allows this site to be considered within the context of ‘acts of citizenship.’ Through legal battles in the court, the group separates themselves from the identity of an illegal person who performs illegal actions and is therefore identified as an illegal. Instead the court becomes an avenue for negotiation and potential solutions. “In case there is a positive court decision is small step toward finding a more definite solutions for our group” (We are Here wants a dialogue for a solution, not another eviction 2016). Legal battles are sites where ‘We are Here’ can publicly and formally contest their circumstances providing a sense of stability within a struggle. Interviewee B described going to court as an “opportunity,” indicating that it was through “the group [trying] to make things right,” through direct channels of communication with the government that ‘We are Here’ could learn useful skills (Appendix 2, Interview B, p. 94).

While a lot of hope rests on court cases as a means of legitimizing residency and the potential for a more stable life, it also represents further uncertainty. What is ultimately unique about this scene is that while ‘We are Here’ is not recognized by the law, the law still affects them. Therefore, acts of appealing to justice and entitlement within a court create a scene where subjects call law into question, which does not recognize them, but also determines their fate. Acting in a way that appeals to justice
when those with legal authority dominate the site of the court, presents the risk of legitimizing the group’s insecurity.

Yeah because my, when I was in detention, in the Rotterdam, last year August 28, a police was arrested me because of, I started a house for the group. So have to be arrested, I have to be in prison. So I’ve been in prison almost [three months]. So they tried to deport me, so [all agree] that they couldn’t deport me, so I’ve been released in December, then I went to the courts, on April 12, yes and [expressed]. And I win the case but they said, “you fined for one fifty.’ But not for me it’s for the group. But I appealed for it, why I shouldn’t be punished and why the United Nations has been--misleading--. (Appendix 2, Interview B, p. 102)

In this situation, the court became a site where undocumented individuals act as citizens who can contest law through appeal, while more broadly questioning the notion of insecurity. Interviewee B attempted to find a new house for the group to prevent further uncertainty for those individuals, and in doing so was arrested because his act threatens the security of the state according to the law. Contestation within a court represents this clash between state security and individual security. Through enacting the right to residence or security ‘We are Here’ proclaims themselves as individuals who deserve rights. Acts of entitlement therefore produce subjects as citizens who deserve security from the state.

**Right to solidarity**

Through organizing as a group, and interacting with supporters, ‘We are Here’ enacts a claim to the right to solidarity. This entails the humanization of the conditions in which ‘We are Here’ operates and the recognition that they need to be supported mentally, physically, and emotionally like any other human. The sites created through the claim to the right to solidarity push ‘We are Here’ out of realm of a humanitarian issue and into their own unique place between inclusivity and a singular identity. The symbolic place is used in outlining this right because it entails no preconceived notions and can therefore be incredibly analytically useful. The network is a necessary byproduct of this right because it much of the functioning of ‘We are Here’ relies on support and solidarity from individual’s within its network. Online is distinguished as a significant site because it is through their website that ‘We are Here’ most frequently establishes a unified front.
**Symbolic place**

Throughout the past seven years and after many evictions, ‘We are Here’ has managed to remain together, not only physically but also symbolically. This symbolic togetherness becomes a site where the right to solidarity can be enacted through acts of uniting and organizing. This site requires the establishment of a certain group identity. Interviewee B believes that it is the shared existence within the asylum gap in the Netherlands that creates this identity. “You know, funny you say about collective. Collective is like a different human beings, different people, different situation. But they are one situation, with different situation take you out of your home but it’s one situation it makes you [united]” (Appendix 2, Interview B, p. 99). The variety of stories which make up different member’s reasons for coming to the Netherlands are all united under the same struggle. Regardless of their location, this solidarity seems to persist. “The truth for We Are Here is that we don’t need the building. We need a permanent place to start a normal life. Therefore we go to the Court with a proposal to sit around the table with all parties concerned to find a way out” (*We are Here wants a dialogue for a solution, not another eviction* 2016). Hence, the maintenance and commitment to unity and a symbolic home are of higher priority than a temporary home that could disperse the group.

The group has held numerous anniversary celebrations to celebrate their unity. Regardless of their housing situation or the legal battles they are involved in, these celebrations exist to solidify the community that ‘We are Here’ has created over seven year. In an invitation posted on the website, ‘We are Here’ invited all former and current supporters to come and celebrate the visibility they have created since 2012:

An invitation from the refugees of We Are Here to all involved or intereses people to celebrate the 4th anniversary of WE ARE HERE with us! Meet the refugees and their stories, experience the history of four years We Are Here through a photo exhibition or documentary, listen to the speeches and stories of today’s and former refugee activists. Or just come and dance and eat (*We are Here 4 freedom festival*, 2016).

The celebrations reflect not only how far they have come and what they have accomplished but also produce a sense of shared identity. Through the journey they have shared or can reflect upon, ‘We are Here’ becomes an identity that can be celebrated.
This symbolic place is not tied to a location or a time, but exists because they need each other to survive.

**Network**

‘We are Here’ claims the right to solidarity and recognition in the relationships they form within their community of supporters and broader network but also within their own group. Two different ruptures can be identified within this site based on their appropriate scale. Collaboration with groups or individuals outside of ‘We are Here’ corresponding with the group and local scale exhibit atypical strategies of undocumented migrants. Marginalized groups are expected to accept help from other organizations such as humanitarian groups, instead of reaching out directly or collaborating with them. On the other hand, the research suggests that the ‘We are Here’ group is more selective and apprehensive about allowing other failed asylum seekers and supporters into the group because of past difficulties with establishing trust. Openness and cooperation exists in tandem with selective or protective notions of networking.

Acts of cooperation allow ‘We are Here’ to become integrated into Dutch society to a certain extent, without utilizing formal channels such as, establishing friends through work or joining a club. By directly reaching out to supporters for assistance and various provisions, ‘We are Here’ establishes themselves as a legitimate organization with various responsibilities. Supporters are kept updated on the progress of the group and are exposed to the everyday challenges that the group faces. They are also frequently invited to join various events and contribute in numerous different ways, indicating that the involvement of the local community is a priority.

This strategic plan which--resources as well, always active, helps you to encourage others and creating links to the civilians and other activism and organizations, the whole society’s network. Using social media as a way of reaching out to people. So I have kind of this strategic plan. That was really working. And it was very, very, very, helpful. (Appendix 2, Interview A, p. 74)

Creating relationships within Dutch society works to humanize refugees as opposed to perpetuating an image of either a security problem or a humanitarian issue. OOPSs become integrated into a network, which becomes important for refugees on an individual scale. When asked about the future of ‘We are Here,’ Interviewee A
responded that he hoped the group would continue this exchange. “Just use each other, create things, do things. That’s all the way, you can be able to create your own network and you feel also apart of the society by your participations, doing these little things” (Appendix 2, Interview A, p. 84). ‘We are Here’ ruptures traditional behavior which constitutes those who exist in marginalized positions or don’t have formal rights. Collaborating with supporters as opposed to passively accepting help from them suggests empowerment within the group, transforming the network site to include undocumented activists as insiders.

Alternatively, research also suggested that the group is apprehensive towards accepting help from all supporters or accepting all potential new members. This observation contradicts the group’s constant need for various provisions, legal assistance, and organizing, as well as their aim towards accessibility within Dutch society. But, selectivity or suspicion towards new supporters or potential members does not stem from a dislike of support, but instead from an act of protection. According to Interviewee A, ‘We are Here’ has had experiences with untrustworthy and disrespectful individuals manipulating images and using the group.

The symbolic meaning in that one, because especially like the last time I tell you there is very, very, very negative messages by people who we used to account and we used to trust them. And so we noticed that when they are new group of refugees, has been kicked out from the night shelter, the [unintelligible word 0:17:14] people, and for them there was new opportunity to, I don’t know, to gain profits, so they ran to there and then they start to create negative image here. (Appendix 2, Interview A, p. 74)

Selectively incorporating new members or supporters into the group parallels the outsiders vs. insider notion explored in the discussion of ‘acts of citizenship.’ But, while insiders are privileged and represent those who have access to rights and responsibilities, insiders in this case have access to a support system and a powerful, persistent identity. Based on the group’s past experiences with negative encounters and outcomes they have decided that the identity is something that needs to be protected. Acts of protection also stem from the recognition that in order for the group to work, there needs to be some level of commitment to its operation and assignments.

Let’s stay together. Our principle that we learn a lot or try to task and trust every human being and to give him job or give him commitment what to do, to believe
in. And when people do what you ask them to do, to believe in it, there is no [manipulation] there is no [divider] there is no personal interest, groups [unintelligible word 0:22:43]. But when we welcome everyone without no tasks everybody come talk to us, that’s why the group cannot successful. (Appendix 2, Interview B, p. 96)

When the group becomes an identity and a cause, and there is no manipulation of false promises, then they can support each other. Interviewee B takes on a lot of this responsibility himself or herself, saying that they need to establish a certain amount of trust before allowing just anyone into their family. This way they can all effectively support each other and not risk the group.

**Online**

Similar to when the right to collective action is claimed, the right to solidarity can be enacted online through the act of mobilization. Conversely, online visibility can be used as a protective mechanism. As a site of contestation, ‘We are Here’ establishes the right to support each other and their image by confronting negativity and addressing misconceptions head on. For example, in a press conference last year, a ‘We are Here’ spokesperson addressed the public after coverage of the group became severely negative:

> We have invited you here today to tell you our story. The past few weeks there has been a lot of negative media attention about our presence in this neighborhood. So we want to explain to you the circumstances that led us up to this point and why we are here (*Wij Zijn Hier persconferentie 2018*).

The importance of speaking together, directly to the public, often from their ‘own’ property, is to shape public opinion and humanize a situation that is often advertised by the media and state the state in a negative light (*Wij Zijn Hier persconferentie 2018*). Sharing experiences and updating the community online combats the exploitative conditions under which the migrant group suffers more. Within the group itself, exploitation exists as well. When asked about the importance of sharing live videos of Dutch language lessons happening at the ‘We are Here’ location, Interviewee A responded that it was motivated by a need to respond to negative and inaccurate messages:

> And then, like sometimes, you don’t need to explain to them like, “hey what you did is wrong and do this and that,” no, just do the right thing. And so it’s very important to let people see what we’re doing here. It’s just like, it’s just ordinary
things. Nothing here is specific, nothing is going to damage or to harm the society. (Appendix 2, Interview A, p. 75)

These actions are meant to not only mobilize support for the group, but also mitigate the tension within and surrounding a place in society, characterized by exclusion and rejection. The scenes created are highly spontaneous and unofficial, but also symbolic and meaningful.
Discussion

The last empirical section highlighted the ways in which ‘We are Here’ has enacted themselves as citizens and the corresponding struggles for rights that this entails. This section will delve deeper into the modes and forms in which ‘We are Here’ members break away from positions as asylum seekers and how this is related to notions of citizenship. Then, I will evaluate if and how these breaks transform notions of citizenship. This will be achieved through first identifying and describing the activist citizens that has been created through these ‘acts of citizenship’ (Isin 2009, p. 383). This constitutes a transformation in the mode of being political, from subject or outsider, to citizen. Through enacting the right to claim rights, undocumented activists constitute themselves as rights-bearing citizens (ibid., p. 383). This is achieved through actions and acts as outlined in my Data Analysis section. The rights identified include: the right to collective action, the right to security and a right to solidarity. Through the articulation of rights, subjects within a group become political by applying various forms of being political, including different orientations, strategies, and tactics (Isin 2008, p. 37). Through being political, individuals enact themselves as citizens. (ibid., p. 37)

There are three main forms, which encompass all three of the rights explored in my analysis, which can be used to describe the emergence of the activist citizen. Visibility is a powerful strategy, hence the name of the group, ‘We are Here.’ Visibility seeks to reject concealment, in favor of drawing attention to situations of struggle. ‘We are Here’ often explicitly suggests this as a strategy in their attempts at being politics (We are everywhere, 2013). Acts of appealing to justice in a court site or acts of squatting in a squatted house provide the group with ample levels of visibility in order to voice their needs and their willingness to be apart of society. Stability is another form that provides an aspect of being political within the ‘We are Here’ group. While governmental institutions do not provide members of the ‘We are Here’ group with stability, an active website provides a consistent online presence in order to interact with the public and supporters. Acts of cooperation within ‘We are Here’s network provide a community from which the group can enact rights to solidarity and develop relationships. Orienting towards unity is evident through the creation of a symbolic place where the group is unified regardless of location and time, and a physical place where acts of inhabiting
create a sense of identity amongst failed asylum seekers who all share similar struggles. Unity rejects the notion of individualism in favor of mutual support. These forms are political in nature and represent the capacity of an individual perform an ‘act of citizenship.’

But, acts imply a theatrical element, meaning they are acted out without any basis in reality. While ‘We are Here’ may be enacting themselves as citizens, and becoming activist citizens, that does not mean that the rights they are claiming have any transformative affects on the institution of citizenship. The issue with the analysis of an activist citizen is that while it acknowledges the agency of undocumented activists and highlights the underlying political realizations in everyday acts and actions, the lack of structural change and the poor circumstances that the group still finds themselves in, prevents the sovereign power from being shifted out of a place of power and responsibility. Theorizing an act as the claiming of rights does not actually give the individual the basic needs they require to survive. Undocumented migrants become a symbol of the refusal of the state to shift their notions of citizenship inline with the shift that has occurred in undocumented activism. ‘We are Here’ is struggling against an unyielding system as evident by the lack of substantial structural rights affording the ‘We are Here’ more equality over the past seven year.

This is underlined by fact that when the state does make decisions that are meant to help OOPSs, they are often inadequate and misdirected, such as the case with the policy of B.B.B. When asked about past arrangements made by the Dutch state, such as BBB (bed, bath, and bread) policy, with the aim of aiding OOPSs, Interviewee B said the pride felt by the Netherlands after implementing the policy meant was misplaced:

Yeah, what, what I know, I feel behind this is that evidence speak. You know when, before the ‘We are Here’ starts there is no BBB. ‘We are Here’ starts [unintelligible word 0:10:10] BBB is not okay, and some of us went there. I trust BBB didn’t serve situation and an international affair is a--is an assertive, the [meaning] of BBB. It’s not correct, it’s incorrect. The whole Netherlands can be proud that they provide people with bath and bread and a shelter. (Appendix 2, Interview B, p. 90)
Within policy meant to come to the aid of refugees, Interviewee B makes the argument that these policies aid the perception of the Netherlands on an international level, as opposed to taking into considerations the actual needs of undocumented migrants. A pattern of pseudo-solutions points to a failure of ‘We are Here’ in obtaining a legitimate seat at the negotiating table.

Additionally, through my research it has is become evident that while ‘We are Here’ seeks to change the implications of a non-status residency, there is also ambition towards obtaining status. This creates an interesting paradox because while the ‘We are Here’ group seeks to transform the process, they are still utilizing it. There does not seem to be a complete rejection of system, but a balance between adaption and resistance. Interviewee A recently received his status after sixteen years of living in the Netherlands and has become less involved with the group as a result (Appendix 2, Interview A, p. 80). Receiving status is considered a success, but also reaffirms the outsiders and insiders divide. While there does seem to be some rejection as evident by several of the acts that are performed that explicitly resist the law, such as the act of squatting, ‘We are Here’ still utilizes institutionalized routes towards status. More so, in the context of the notable longevity of the group, it is a reflection of the unwillingness of the Dutch government to adjust its policies in line with dynamic aspects of citizenship. Citizenship instead becomes a fortress, reflecting ‘domopolitical’ tendencies of the state and OOPSs lack of legitimacy.

Ultimately, ‘We are Here’ makes a claim to rights based on their residence in the Netherlands. This claim exists after the formal denial of citizenship. The struggles of ‘We are Here’ constitute an insistence on legal recognition after they have been denied legal recognition. Organization, unity and visibility are tools that give them some amount of political leverage, but without legitimacy the group cannot create real structural change. Being seen and being heard are useless if they are not being listened to. The crisis of legitimacy for the ‘We are Here’ group is what fails to produce significant change and instead sometimes results in the negative manipulation of strategies in order to serve the interests of the state. The undocumented activist becomes a symbol of the reluctance of the state to overhaul asylum policy, and a continuation of the neglecting of responsibility towards non-citizens. ‘Acts of citizenship’ seeks to
challenge the state as the central regulator of acceptable conduct, but fails to consider the exploitative measures exercised by the sovereign state in promoting their own legitimacy at the expense of undocumented failed asylum seekers. This may suggest a reinvestment in the citizen by the state, strengthening the notion of citizenship as rigid and exclusive.
Conclusion

While I have made a case for the dominating aspects of citizenship in the previous section, it is important to not to study these concepts by fitting them into a binary (McNevin 2007). Undocumented migrant activism can be perceived as a reminder of the significance of the state, it also produces subjects with responsibilities. ‘Acts of citizenship’ produce empowering aspects by recognizing the “kind of creative political work” of individuals seeking recognition, solidarity and legitimacy, and constantly challenging governmental institutions (Depraetere & Oosterlynck 2017, p. 706). When acknowledged through these principles, the acts of ‘We are Here’ produces individuals that exist in the space between citizen and subject as opposed to transforming into or from either one. This constitutes a unique aspect of ‘We are Here’ in which both challenging and partaking in channels of acceptability blurs the line produced by Isin between active citizenship and activist citizenship.

Through the previous discussion of my data, I have identified three rights that the ‘We are Here’ group has claimed through various acts, highlighting the agency of these undocumented individuals. By doing so, excluded or marginalized subjects can be acknowledged as being integral parts of the political societies in which they live. This trend as suggested in my conceptual framework and introduction is the result of globalization and migration (Isin 2008, p. 15). Through ‘acts of citizenship,’ these trends can be theorized by approaching the study of undocumented activism from the ground up as opposed to through the lens of the privileged and dominant social groups. While this research further complicated the notion of citizenship by both reflecting on its malleability and its rigidity, it also suggests the potential for empowerment through transformations that occurs as the result of approaching citizenship studies through acts. “We are Here’ become migrant activists and break away from their given positions as failed asylum seeker through rewriting what it means to hold an illegitimate status.
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Appendix 1: Prepared interview questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, how long have you been in the Netherlands, how you became associated with the We are Here group?
2. What does the We are Here group mean to you? What does it stand for?
3. From the research that I’ve conducted so far, I’ve learned that the We are Here group works to make their current situation in the Netherlands a visible issue and assert their political voice.
4. What sorts of actions or events have you participated in while being associated with the We are Here group?
   a. Squatting, occupying, language classes, writing letters to parliament
5. How were these actions organized which support these causes?
   a. What other actors are involved in creating these actions? Including Dutch municipalities, humanitarian groups and other supporters.
6. What are the methods or strategies that the We are Here group use in order to assert their political voice?
   a. How have the methods or strategies of the We are Here group changed over the years?
   b. You also have an active media presence, such as your Facebook page, as well as
      i. You has this contributed to your message of visibility and political involvement?
7. What was the goal of the group when you participated in this action?
   a. What sort of meaning do you prescribe to these actions?
   b. What is the symbolic meaning?
8. Often, if the Dutch parliament agrees to provide provisions, such as the reception centers which were opened in 2017, it comes with certain conditions, often that people be deported in the following months. Additionally, we see that the We are Here group is sometimes left out of the negotiating discussion such as, for your current situation with the 24/7 shelters?
a. What sort of meaning do you prescribe to these actions by parliament?

b. When the Dutch government offers these provisions or attempts to meet some of the group’s demands, is this a success?
   i. How do you balance receiving these provisions with also maintaining the ideals which this group stands for which include, visibility, negotiating as a group, and ultimately policy change and pushing for more?

9. In the past you have rejected assistance from the parliament for these reasons? Would you consider this in itself as a form of protest?

10. How do you view the disconnect between local municipality actions, such as the cooperation you've received from the Amsterdam municipality, and national parliamentary decisions?

11. The We are Here group has existed in Amsterdam since 2012, how has the group been able to remain together and remain active and push for the causes it believes in, despite state actions to disperse its members?

12. Historically, when you look at the expansion of the scope of citizenship and who is included in the political space, it is those without citizenship status who mobilize change, such as, women, or marginalized ethnic groups, do you see migrant activists as a continuation of this history of the expansion of the reach of citizenship?
   a. If so, how do you see migrant activists in the Netherlands and throughout the world, affecting the reach of citizenship?
Appendix 2: Interview transcripts

Interview A

Interview date: May 27, 2019
Interview time: approximately 14:30h
Location: Uilenstede 475, 1183 AG Amsterdam, Netherlands
Transcribed: May 28, 2019 13:35h
Interviewer: Margo van den Helder
Interview length: 0:40:39 (hours:minutes:seconds)

[Beginning of Interview 0:00:02]

INTERVIEWER: Perfect, can I put this here maybe? Awesome. Okay. Thank you again for agreeing to speak with me.

INTERVIEWEE: You’re welcome.

[laughter]

INTERVIEWER: We don’t need to go through formalities. Yeah specifically my research again is looking at this group. And through the academic lens of ‘acts of citizenship’, which means that people who don’t have status are still claiming rights that on paper they don’t have, but what it does is it challenges what it means to be a citizen theoretically. So I’m trying to write a paper about this. And so I’d like to look at the acts and the practices that ‘We are Here’ has done in the past seven years and yeah how these acts are challenging ideas of citizenship.

This is relevant because ‘We are Here’ is left out of this discussion and the Netherlands in general is. And this group is unique because it’s been really resilient and it’s lasted for seven years and it’s had many successes. So yeah, so first I just wanted to ask you about yourself, how long you’ve been in the Netherlands and how you’ve--your experiences with the Dutch asylum policy, if you’re willing to discuss them and then specifically how you became apart of ‘We are Here’?

INTERVIEWEE: Okay, which one you want to know first?

INTERVIEWER: Whatever you think is most important.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe--you’ve said you’ve been here for sixteen years.
INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

[0:02:00]

INTERVIEWER: And you’ve recently received status.

INTERVIEWEE: After sixteen years.

INTERVIEWER: After sixteen years. And you went through the asylum policy process. What was your experience with that?

[0:02:19]

INTERVIEWEE: My experience with that, really, it wasn’t a good experience. It wasn’t a good experience.

Like sometimes, you come from really from serious problem behind and especially when it’s a war and you still have that trauma. On the other side they did not believe you but even sometimes they create some like false accusation to block you, not to receive you’re right. And it hurts, it hurts a lot. It hurts, it was very negative experience, not positive.

INTERVIEWER: Not positive.

And the ‘We are Here’ collective, being here with other people who maybe relate to your situation, obviously still is a horrible situation, but how did you, how did you discover this group? And what, like what was your reasoning behind becoming involved?

[0:03:32]

INTERVIEWEE: The group was, I remember in 2000--the end of 2011, beginning of the start of 2012, I was in Ter Apel. And that was an [unintelligible word 0:03:50] centrum for deportation. And the maximum period of you have--you should stay there was three months and then they keep me there for nine months. No that place is not good, it’s not good. And at the same time there’s load of asylum seekers who been kicked to the streets. And yeah, detentions also was, they are very full--

INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: --with refugees and but really no one was happy and yeah people start to look around and I think in that time Dutch government they make new law, they said if you host a refugee, if you host a refugee in your house, you have to pay ten thousand--
INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: --pounds. And people start to look around like, we have been very harshly treated by this system, what we can do, there’s only one thing left that to come together and to create visibilities.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

[0:04:55]

INTERVIEWEE: So they started a small tent there in Ter Apel.

And then after that, I have been kicked out from Ter Apel and to me it wasn’t good time to come to join the group back then because I still have church mission for two years. I’ve already started like six months and then I have to go to Ter Apel so, and I was thinking like if I can start doing my mission earlier, or I come to Leiden or to Wassenaar, because I was member of Wassenaar branch, so our church was located in Leiden then we moved from Leiden to Zoetermeer.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry, your church?

[phone rings 0:05:42]

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: And so--when I have get kicked out from Ter Apel and I said okay, “I’m going to go back to Wassenaar, and I will do my mission there.”

And I head to Wassenaar. I did my church mission there, which left was one and a half year. And I finished and I decided to come to join the group.

[0:06:05]

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: And everyone there was thinking, I was crazy. Like, (laughs) because--

INTERVIEWER: Crazy that you came back?

INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: Or crazy?

INTERVIEWEE: Crazy cause, like I’m going from Wassenaar to--I’m going to come live in a squatted house.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: And yeah--I think they have right to think that way, but also I have right also to think to come to join the group too. Because like, work was important for me, I finished it, that was church issues, I finished from it. And then now something, I have time now to do something for myself. So I want to see who am I also among this society, and I need to get my residence and then, so I said, “okay I am going to join the group.” That’s why people decided like you’re going from big regular house to the squatted house [something] make no sense.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

[0:07:00]

INTERVIEWEE: And then, just I come, then the group was in--.they were in I think, Jan van Galenstraat.

Somewhere else there--[against, what is it’s--] The opposite side of St--.not St.[Lucas] no, there’s hospital there [forget it’s name], but I don’t know.

INTERVIEWER: The OLV--the west? Is it in the west?

INTERVIEWEE: No, not in the west.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, Jan van Galenstraat.

INTERVIEWEE: I think--St. Lucas ziekenhuis?

INTERVIEWER: Oh okay.

INTERVIEWEE: You remember that name? I don’t know.

INTERVIEWER: I know Jan van Galenstraat.

INTERVIEWEE: In Oude West, in de Oud west.

INTERVIEWER: Oud West, yeah.

van den Helder 69
INTERVIEWEE: Yeah I think in that area.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

[0:07:41]

INTERVIEWEE: So, and I come there. So, like next day, there were a general meeting, I don’t know, a financial meeting about the group and those things. And I come but I did not speak, I did not say anything.

[0:08:00]

And later on at the end of the meeting [someone asked] why didn’t you speak, why didn’t you share? In the meeting. Well, I don’t like to talk about economics so--I always, I like just to be part of a [movement].

INTERVIEWER: Right, you’re motivation is more activism.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah but also--

INTERVIEWER: Speaking--

INTERVIEWEE: Because, also I see people were talking about financial sometimes they have kind of this—[makes a hand gesture]

INTERVIEWER: Closed. [interpretation of hand gesture]

INTERVIEWEE: Kind of crash.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah okay.

INTERVIEWEE: Like no, we should do this, we should do that, we should invest here, we should, no, we should look at this [unintelligible words] that kind of, lot of, you know? And I--

INTERVIEWER: Clash yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and I don’t want to be apart of that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: So that’s why I decided not to speak and not going to share.
Take these things from them. And so next meeting so we start just to talk like to see what is going on. How we are going to fix, how we can create visibilities? [And I] share my ideas with the people and we start to work.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of these ideas that then became realities?

INTERVIEWEE: The ideas first thing I was focusing on [was] sharing with people the situation and to create awareness and a special kind of exchange with the students because from them you can get new ideas and so you can help them, I don’t know, what they want to get, like use each other in a positive way.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: You’re doing something for your studying but also I’m doing something also for my visibilities.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

[0:09:27]

INTERVIEWEE: So and then that time the things who are really [were much together]. Because everything we use sometime to record it and let people share their opinion and just post it.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: And everybody was involved and everybody was like you come but also you will see yourself later in [it]. So that was--

INTERVIEWER: So you would share things online. We were talking about your online presence. Also there were protests and occupations, were those also organized by you?

INTERVIEWEE: There is a lot of things we used to, for example, there’s a lot of things I don’t used to share them. Like for example I used host every time students, like sometimes until now largest group that I have hosted was hundred-twenty people. Students from Germany, I don’t know, social worker’s [come], those things. But then, sometimes especially the students are underage, we didn’t share it online.
INTERVIEWER: Okay.

[0:10:34]

INTERVIEWEE: Because also for [themselves], like especially in this time now people using--the [interworld, sorry] networks sometimes for bad things. So to help or just to be clean and also--

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: For the student I think it’s very important especially for under aged people because if there is any picture was used in the wrong way then you go will be part of destroying [he] or she future.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: So we don’t need to [be involved in that]. That’s why we don’t share.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you have to be smart.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, like when people are from the universities come, there’s things they know, we’ll tell them [you guys] we’re going to share and that’s different. So that’s why there’s a lot of things we don’t share.

INTERVIEWER: You don’t share, okay.

INTERVIEWEE: But you maybe you come give some pictures as a memory, in the future maybe you come.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Maybe you can explain to our students for example these people from this college or from that, I don’t know. But not for social media.

INTERVIEWER: And so these meetings you hold when you are trying to engage with students or protests or occupations, or often you’ve taken your cases to the court, or you’ve--

INTERVIEWEE: No depends.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

[0:12:06]

INTERVIEWEE: You know depend[s], depend[s] on what you need and what they need.
INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: And there is sometimes you need to be flexible to create from this project, something linked to that one.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: But then, you don’t need to make another event. Just from here you can [post more].

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: And it will be there received as--

INTERVIEWER: So engaging with other--

INTERVIEWEE: It’s very important--

INTERVIEWER: Other members of the population--

INTERVIEWEE: Yes--

INTERVIEWER: Other organizations--

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we’re activists, I worked with two different organizations.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

[0:12:37]

INTERVIEWEE: And that really is very important, you know, to share. But sometimes not everything is only for you, for example to create visibility or to--no sometimes also you need to come down a little bit, sometime[s] people come to you [just] only they want to know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: And then you have also to pay them [the] same attention— with others. Like if you said, okay for example, no these people just they come or they don’t, [okay then] we don’t have to put more effort, then you’re wrong.

INTERVIEWER: Right, it needs to be a mutual collaboration.
INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay. So, when you’re deciding how you’re going to promote your ideals, these strategies of collaboration, collaborating with third parties, are there any other sort of methods that you use to try to get your message out there, or claim this political voice?

INTERVIEWEE: No, no, no, look (laughs), I think you should have a strategic plan.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

[0:13:59]

INTERVIEWEE: This strategic plan which--resources as well, always active, helps you to encourage others and creating links to the civilians and other activism and organizations, the whole society’s network. Using social media as a way of reaching out to people. So I have kind of this strategic plan. That was really working. And it was very, very, very, helpful.

[0:14:48]

INTERVIEWER: Has your strategy changed over the years? Depending on what sort of action you’re participating in [phone rings 0:14:58], or for example if the political climate has changed or if you have received some sort of provision from the government and then you maybe try to change your strategy to fit that? Or, cause this group has existed for seven years now and you’ve succeeded in a lot, but I mean ultimately--you want a deeper, a deeper change.

INTERVIEWEE: Really, my strategic plan is something, which has no--a specific place or [tunnel] that should be aimed. And I guess always working deeper into the world societies, like I told you now before.

I’m busy with my new project, International African Refugees Agency. But also part of that is gunna be World Food Recycling Kitchen. Something just is going [on, on and on]. And then in twenty years you need to have your new strategic plan.

INTERVIEWER: Exactly, and I think it also seems like a lot of your successes have built on smaller successes and a lot of the times it’s smaller things such as, hosting a hundred and fifty students or even conducting Dutch classes and showing the Netherlands that you are all living here. That may contribute to greater successes. So, what is like for example, hosting Dutch classes here and posting videos of it online, which you recently did. What sort of symbolic meaning--
The symbolic meaning in that one, because especially like the last time I tell you there is very, very, very negative messages by people who we used to account and we used to trust them. And so we noticed that when they are new group of refugees, has been kicked out from the night shelter, the [unintelligible word 0:17:14] people, and for them there was new opportunity to, I don’t know, to gain profits, so they ran to there and then they start to create negative image here.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

And then, like sometimes, you don’t need to explain to them like, “hey what you did is wrong and do this and that,” no, just do the right thing. And so it’s very important to let people see what we’re doing here. It’s just like, it’s just ordinary things. Nothing here is specific, nothing is going to damage or to harm the society.

Cause yeah often times you were saying earlier that whether it’s through negative comments online or maybe people speaking for you who don’t really represent you, you have to, in your visibility make sure that people are seeing you for who you really are.

And also the message of that class also is special to these people whom are busy creating kind of these negative images. If they put their [effort] to make this class better, it would more achievement.

Yeah.

So--

Okay.

That is the limitation. I hope they understand it [unintelligible words 0:18:40].

Yeah.

Yeah.

I thought it was a very positive message. So, in the past and then also recently, I kind of asked you about this early, if the Dutch parliament does agree to provide you with certain things such as, there was limited
reception centers open in 2017, but that came with the condition that people would agree to a deportation policy, or recently these twenty-four seven shelters which will be hopefully implemented in the future, you mentioned in a video that you were being left out of the negotiation or that you didn’t feel like the people who were providing the twenty-four seven shelters were directly communicating with you about what you needed. What do you think is the meaning behind this sort of exclusion by parliament from involving you all in the decision-making?

INTERVIEWEE: You know what? The message here [is] to both. The message to people who are sitting there, talking about the topic, and they did not make any [talking] for people to come in there, and also to the people and the politician who agreed to work on that. And also to keep the public updated, updated about what is really going on. Because I believe now, like now if we think globally I think we will end this twenty-four seven shelter issues in, within one week.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, right.

[0:20:12]

INTERVIEWEE: But believe me now [phone rings 0:20:13] [they waste a lot] and they spend a lot of time, but there’s still nothing there yet. But we can finish it in one week.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So if, so do you think that it’s almost purposeful that the parliament is leaving you out of discussions?

INTERVIEWEE: I think, it’s not from the parliament--because that--the national government already deciding with Amsterdam on our plan. This is about local things here.

INTERVIEWER: Local things.

INTERVIEWEE: [At least in Amsterdam I think].

INTERVIEWER: So there’s a disconnect.

[0:20:50]

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I think people, they should not [hoping] about that, because now, today we can contribute but tomorrow we would not have a time even to contribute.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, I also kind of asked you about this earlier, but in these situations, such as maybe you receiving your status, but many other people still haven’t. It’s a success that these individual cases might be met, but how do you maintain with those individual successes, a sort of bigger goal which is still visibility, still being able to negotiate as a group, and ultimately a change in policy hopefully? Which is maybe very far in the future, but hopefully not.

[0:21:50]

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah wait, somebody let sometimes let be a little bit realistic. That doesn’t mean like we have a bad president in Sudan for example, that all Africa is bad. There is some places that is good in Africa. There’s some countries [sneezes]--

INTERVIEWER: Bless you.

INTERVIEWEE: Thank you.

So there’s some countries are good. There have no problem like--Gambia, Uganda, I give you just an example. Kenya. All these countries, there are people are free to go from Europe here, holidays to come and visit. So, in this case, we will not for example, ask the government to give everyone a service according that he is here because if he’s here. No. Because I think from the safe countries there is somehow you can earn vis--

Also, they should understand also Europe is not like a kind of open gate, just come and go. No. They should qualify things from the country there and then they come here. So in this case, we ask the government to just look at the cases who should be saved.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah but then my successful, I did not think I’m successful yet. I will see me successful when I’m able to do something for the [old] world. For example part of it, getting paper, I will be able to move, that is [a] very good starting point. Then I will still have to work hard.

[0:24:59]

INTERVIEWER: Right, of course. Within this sort of research that I’m doing, there’s distinction between status, having status as a citizen, and then practicing as a citizen, which means that you are asking for rights such
as, being able to be politically active, or having a roof over your head. Things that in the Dutch policy at least, people don’t have a right to. How do you think that the ‘We are Here’ group has achieved this sort of practice, by like asking for certain rights and maybe going to court and using legal avenues or yeah, like you said hosting students, and occupying empty buildings. Do you think that--yeah sorry, what do you think of this?

[0:25:22]

INTERVIEWEE: If you could read the exact point of--

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: --the question?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, sorry.

INTERVIEWEE: That’s okay.

INTERVIEWER: I’m struggling with this one.

INTERVIEWEE: That’s okay. (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: If people are living in a place and they are not recognized by the government as being here, in Holland that means that they don’t receive any rights, which is the whole point of ‘We are Here’, is trying to support people and push towards this status. I guess yeah, what do you think, when you here me say a practice of citizenship, in terms of the ‘We are Here’ group, what comes to mind in terms of maybe challenging accessibility--like political, challenging what it means to be apart of the political space? Does that make you think of anything?

[0:26:25]

INTERVIEWEE: That makes me think, sometimes that [I] thank the democracy. This country, which is [offering us] a space of practicing, which we are not able to do within our countries.

INTERVIEWER: In your own countries?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, there is a lot of points, people sometime I see there’s a lot of people sometimes they’re angry and even into their contribution. I just think that and I admire them, but you don’t need to look to the situation just from one side.

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INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: No, no. You need really to check every point to know what is the detail of that point. And why that is happening and what is allowed and what is not. And what [it] is you are able to do it here, in Europe, a new country, not over in the old continent. So, you need to get all this information in your mind and then so when you speak you will speak, I think, something wise.

INTERVIEWER: (Laughs) I think it’s interesting because you seem to be coming at this big issue from a very realistic standpoint which is, people are coming from places where maybe they don’t have certain political rights or don’t have access to certain things and they come here and although their situation is still very, very bad--

[0:28:12]

INTERVIEWEE: They’re still actively political--

INTERVIEWER: They are still being active politically, which is something that they couldn’t do in their previous country.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, that’s interesting.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But still maybe there, do you think that there’s a lack of acknowledgement by the parliament, or by local governments?

INTERVIEWEE: I think, I think yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: So even though there is activism there aren’t as many results as people hope?

INTERVIEWEE: I think there is lack of communication in between because I think these people they should, they can also, involve on--making the law better of this country. For example, if each of the EU’s countries, like they have to develop fifteen thousand article weekly, every week in the law.

[0:29:17]

INTERVIEWER: Right.
INTERVIEWEE: These lawmakers they are working so hard. That is true, they have no time eh? Every week should be fifteen, new fifteen thousand articles, this is not easy.

INTERVIEWER: No.

INTERVIEWEE: So I think these people also should be part of that.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, again you were talking previously about the importance of the group being a group, and not, and speaking as one voice. The group has stayed together for seven years now despite many challenges, despite a lot of attempts by the parliament to disperse them and by other organizations or individual that you were saying. How has the group been able to do this? And remain active and continue to push for what they need?

INTERVIEWEE: Because I think, people also they don’t have any other choice left. So it’s the only one thing left, is just to struggle. You know and--

INTERVIEWER: Struggling together is--

INTERVIEWEE: Yes--

INTERVIEWER: --different then struggling--

INTERVIEWEE: ---individually.

INTERVIEWER: ---individually.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, so that’s the only one thing left. That’s the only way they can do now [I think]. But also like for example, I’m not here anymore, but I come sometimes, like I’m here today also. Like, if I have nothing to do in the future for example, something with the refugees around the world, I will be less active also, because I have to look other things. But what I’m doing there also, it’s something has, has something to do also with these people. Very close to them so it’s important for me also to keep myself updated by what is going on and what is happening. And to make my daily reports about it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

[0:31:15]

INTERVIEWEE: And to note some things, and I also would help, will help me for example on my first presentation when I’m going to open, or when we’re going to
announce International Refugees Agency, so we need to to be very close to these people.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: And that will help.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you’re involvement here will help in your future projects.

INTERVIEWEE: Will help a lot, will help a lot, because now I just had a phone call yesterday from Niger, you hear about Niger?

[0:31:47]  

INTERVIEWER: I’m sorry?


INTERVIEWER: No I haven’t.

INTERVIEWEE: Niger is a country between--.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I’ve, yeah--

INTERVIEWEE: --between Nigeria and Algeria and Libya. It’s in the middle like that [hand gesture]. So there is border security there, which is supported by EU, they sponsor there a lot of money there to create these things there, but then there is a lot young people there that really suffering from, so they ask us here, “hey what you guys can do?” Also, had also phone calls also from Arabia, there’s lot of [unintelligible words 0:32:26] sold like slave, and there is lot of going on things, lot of going on things. So--

[0:32:35]  

INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: I don’t know but to me everything is important.

INTERVIEWER: Everything is important, yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You seem to be very involved in many things, which is very impressive.

INTERVIEWEE: [laughs]
Yeah, I guess my last question, historically when we look at who has access to citizenship status, it’s generally the people who don’t have access who are expanding the scope of citizenship, so like women or marginalized ethnic groups especially in the U.S. where I’m from. Do you see migrant and specifically migrant activists, and people how have been denied asylum, do you see this kind of as a maybe as a continuation of what it historically an expanding concept? Do you think that there could be real change in the future, in how these people are treated legally?

You mean [the whole the] group?

The, yeah, I think, do you think that not only in Holland but there are migrant activist groups all over Europe and the U.S., when a lot of Mexicans come to the U.S. they like live together and try to voice their--have a political voice because yeah they have to, and often times it’s those people who don’t have citizenship that are acting as citizens, that expand what yeah, make the system more inclusive. Do you think that migrant activism in the future could maybe expand?

You know--

Do you think that they’ll have more rights in the future?

What would I want to say to you, but also you know what I’m thinking deeply? The world needs new leaders.

Yeah, that’s--I agree.

That’s serious, you know?

Yeah.

Because like a--we fight against the corruptions in our country but we support the corrupted people outside the country. And then we have this [hand gesture], this wave of immigration, this migration waves comes back to us.

Yeah.

That’s the result of what we have did there.
INTERVIEWER: Right. So new leaders?
INTERVIEWEE: You know--
INTERVIEWER: --who will to change the--
INTERVIEWEE: Who will change the subject, seriously.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah.
INTERVIEWEE: Like right now in Malawi, like this there is, I don’t know, this flooding. Did you hear about it?
INTERVIEWER: I did. Yeah.
INTERVIEWEE: Okay, and okay, then okay, let’s distinguish the climate change, these things, you see the result of it somewhere in the South Africa, okay. We cannot ask everyone to be vegetarian, but also like we don’t have to think the pollutions only come from cars, fuel, these things. But we can help people making better choice. It will decrease the climate change.
INTERVIEWER: Right.
[0:36:11]
INTERVIEWEE: And then, okay, it’s same thing. Like if we still supportive to the corrupted people then the result of it, like--in different term--let me think a while--[pause 0:36:40-0:36:49]. Exporting ammunitions, equal, increased migrations.
INTERVIEWER: Right. So it’s a circle.
INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I’m just, I don’t know really how to put it on sentence.
INTERVIEWER: So do you think the solution to maybe what people are suffering here is, will be, is indirectly solved by leaders who are creating wars and terrible conditions in countries such as--or, you know, using a ton of CO2 to power big oil things which also negatively affects people who are susceptible to climate change?
INTERVIEWEE: Yes.
[0:37:45]
INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay.
INTERVIEWEE: And then now like if somebody comes from [unintelligible word 0:37:49] from--which country you know we talk about it?

INTERVIEWER: Malawi?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, from Malawi for example to demand asylum they will say, “no this man is economic migrant, he’s not regular refugee.”

INTERVIEWER: Doesn’t make sense.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: It’s interesting, I think it’s a very, very relevant--

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah it’s complicated.

INTERVIEWER: It’s complicated, yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, it’s very complicated.

INTERVIEWER: Very complicated. You said that you are going to be maybe less involved, what do you, what would you like maybe the other leaders in this in this group, what do you think they need to contribute, so that the ‘We are Here’ collective is strong?

INTERVIEWEE: I think really they just have to do their best and also like they shouldn’t have to stop exchanging information with the students because this is very good. Like when you help someone and someone help you, in the time of need, then that is good.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: It’s very good I think and--

INTERVIEWER: Engaging with young people and getting them involved?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, being more active. Just use each other, create things, do things. That’s all the way, you can be able to create your own network and you will feel also apart of the society by your participations, doing these little things. And like it doesn’t have to start something from big things, no you start it from small things and--

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.
INTERVIEWEE: --and just let it grow, and always the trueness. It’s a weapon and you can use it at all times. I meet people of, some American activist, I don’t want to just to mention—[knock at the door 0:39:52] Come in.

INTERVIEWER: Hello!

INTERVIEWEE: Hello!

[Other interviewee enters]

[Other people speaking in room from 0:39:59-0:40:06]

INTERVIEWEE: When we talk, and then I ask them, what is really keeps you strong until now, and you will be able to cross continent to visit people and they said, “yes, only one thing, just be true.” Trueness. If you skip from that, one single point--

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: You lose.

INTERVIEWER: I think that’s very true [laughs]. Thank you so much.

INTERVIEWEE: You’re welcome.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

INTERVIEWEE: You’re welcome.

[End of Interview 0:40:38]
INTERVIEWER: Awesome. Thank you again for talking with me. I have a few questions about your group and your involvement and if you don’t want to answer anything, that’s okay. Specifically, I really want to look at the actions that you take as a group in order to promote what you believe in. So often times this may be, in the past you’ve held protests, you’ve held marches, you were discussing how you want to open a school and educate people. Also, I see you’re involved in ac--for mental health. You’ve taken your cases to court and you are often squatting in a building which is it’s own form of protest and being a group and being visible. Have you participated in any of these and if so, what sort of meaning do you believe that it has behind it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, my name is--.

INTERVIEWER: --? -- told me upstairs, but yeah.

[0:01:28]

INTERVIEWEE: -- [spelling name]. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Like that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, Interviewee.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: --yes it’s correct.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah?

[0:01:41]

INTERVIEWEE: So, you’re question. Everything you said about the group, happened in this group. It was the reality you know? In the past the kind of the policy has created some, from the right wings party in the Netherlands. To, to
selected some people to use as an example, to not have any right for anything. Also, this is very dangerous because that is an example, that’s the time that nobody can welcome refugees in their house, who have been kick out of the camp.

They no have right to walk in the street, police have to check the streets and check their—[unintelligible words 0:02:33-0:02:35]. They created detention to the people like us who been in detention, to go back. And according the law who’s not to put in detention, five or ten times, [only one time] to know who you are or to send you back to your country or to give you life. Then after [their failure], to put back on street. After detention they couldn’t deport you because the best way to deport you is through [ambassador], your own country, African ambassador.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: [So when you’re] in detention, you also deal with these people, so question is, [you deserve] to give life, if they couldn’t deport you. So then, ‘We are Here’ also magnet by different refugees, different immigrant, different, magnet, to be in the same situation that they [strip] their rights of not achieve anything in this society of Netherlands. So, created that no one should be sleeping street, anyone have right, to have roof over his head. So, and that the reason why sometimes sleep in the station, sleep in a [unintelligible word 0:03:51] house in Waterlooplein, sleep in the Bijlmer, [unintelligible word 0:03:55], to sleep in the [Netherlands], sleep different locations, and this period is different policy but they change a lot of policies. For example, we change the neighborhood to give access for the owner of the building to use this building to do something because most of the building squatted is abandoned and they [unintelligible word 0:04:17], from the government to unlock, they need to have authority to do something.

Well when a squatter did, then government will support them [unintelligible word 0:04:26], to do something, they have--[unintelligible word 0:04:28], then they’ll have the access to change the government [unintelligible word 0:04:32], negative to positive. So, then the same time they were doing demonstration, most important time during the time of the meeting of the mayor or any important
[unintelligible words 0:04:43-0:04:46], trespass our situation because in this seven years this ‘We are Here’ [we] pass a difficult period through. More than five people in the ‘We are Here’, dying [unintelligible words 0:04:57].

More than thirty people deported, more than twenty people has now been handicapped and more than ten people also now being, how do you call it? Disability, not handicapped—they are mentality cannot even behave normal.

So, pass all these things through. So it’s very difficult for the ‘We are Here’ so every actual squat in the house, or organize demonstration, organizing a football team, organize ‘We are Here’ academics, or organizing the school, [unintelligible words 0:05:42], school, who are doing everything necessary to fill the gap the system cannot fill. Now, the work of the government could be [form full], so we try to fill the gap, to take responsibility, volunteer, environmental—voluntary environmental safety, in the sense of nothing to something, to do something.

[0:06:09]

To make sure that no one is sleeping in the street, and make sure that every our brother [only have support], and make sure that we keep the house visible to create activities and keep it clean and try also to take responsibility like it’s our own property. To keep the house in order.

[0:06:32]

And also [screening] any negative, dirty people, people who like to steal, who collaborate with the police, everywhere we are living, police house must know. So past almost two years now, we have a good communication and good negotiation with the Bijlmer police, they trust the [environmental] safety.

[0:06:54]

So, so how they challenge concerning [unintelligible word 0:06:57], and the supporters. So, and supporters of the group has had different mindset and a sense of misunderstanding. Like they can’t help me. Ask me what you want, I can tell you what I want, then they can help me. That they cannot tell me what you want to happen, if you cannot, you cannot help me, because you can’t help me.

[0:07:24]

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So this is also a challenge we have. For example, there’s a group of corruption going on, I understand the government has making mistake by the principle and law and the politics. But [the mass] is also activists, supporters. Also there is something going on, [refugee]--[unintelligible word 0:07:48]. It’s very big [dangerous], because why the government policy has not [form full]? Well, because the people want to create the reality. Because a world cannot distinguish because the people use us as [their tools]. So, to be unstoppable program, because some people it’s their business, it’s their life daily, our situation, so how can we blame government? How can we—get our life? So we’re in the middle. So it’s very, [they stop us], [unintelligible words 0:08:25].

INTERVIEWER: So do you think that the government when, like recently you’re currently kind of negotiating this 24/7 housing currently, but I’m—[references a name] was telling me about how the government provides minimal things like this but--

INTERVIEWEE: Well people [manipulate] it here.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

[0:08:54]

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, people [manipulate it], because it should be going the right way.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: But because it--why you should you go the right way, why you trying the idea of to come because of something’s not right, if it’s right.

So why you bring idea to go to right way to go to wrong way, so it’s not right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And there’s an issue that the government doesn’t let you be at the negotiating table so in the past like 2017, there was a some [pause] reception centers and it came with the condition that you had to agree to deportation policy or now with the 24/7 shelters, they don’t allow you to be at the negotiating table. It seems like--I mean--what do you think that the meaning behind these decisions by parliament is?

[0:09:54]
Cause they’re very exclusionary.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, what, what I know, I feel behind this is that evidence speak. You know when, before the ‘We are Here’ starts there is no BBB. ‘We are Here’ starts [unintelligible word 0:10:10] BBB is not okay, and some of us went there. I trust BBB didn’t serve situation and an international affair is a--is an assertive, the [meaning] of BBB. It’s not correct, it’s incorrect. The whole Netherlands can be proud that they provide people with bath and bread and a shelter. It’s not [unintelligible word 0:10:37], to be in policy and to even being to be proud, to speak, the government said I will do something, it’s a very, [unintelligible word 0:10:44] talking about the human being. It’s not common space.

INTERVIEWER : ...political?

INTERVIEWEE: You need to speak it out.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: You know, be proud of it as a project, it’s negative.

INTERVIEWER : It’s negative, yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: So ‘We are Here’ create the idea that they do that. Okay, most of ‘We are Here’ people, all of them already been in the camp. For one year, from two years, from five years. And this camp is most terrible and unstable, unbalanced situation, or to go back to your country, or get the status in Holland or get stable life here. But what is missing? That they couldn’t get it in the five years, three years, one month, three months in the camp? To go back to your home or to get a life here. So do you think [unintelligible words 0:11:33-0:11:35] by negotiator, that they can provide you when you assist someone to go back, when the camp couldn’t provide it?

Do you understand my point?

INTERVIEWER : I do, I do.

INTERVIEWEE: This is the point I’m talking about. This what -- is talking about.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.
INTERVIEWEE: He’s not kidding.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, but to accept it in the common sense.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Because you have to agree for something to see because it never happened, they’re still talking.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: They’re still--yeah, but the policy of going back, or this, is not negotiable and it shouldn’t be implemented until [unintelligible words 0:12:08]. Cause the [main of the] there is nothing [unintelligible words 0:12:10] to give people mistake of government, make from the camp, to give them place to sleep to get back to the camp or get their life. So other things there’s no point, if you want to go back there to the camp, to the camp to detention, detention or you get a life. It’s not [unintelligible words 0:12:29] I need to go back.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

[0:12:31]

INTERVIEWEE: I’m talking of official way.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So, the official, the official way needs to change?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Because it seems like what the government offers is sort of like a bandage but what ‘We are Here’ wants is structural change?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, if you want me to go, you need opportunity to go back to the camp and from camp to deport or to give life to [Holland].

INTERVIEWER: Right.
INTERVIEWEE: This very simple question because ambassadors, detention, DT&V and the [TKF] or [TTK] and the foreign police all want apartment, IOM, all--Red Cross all want [apartment] at one point. In the camp, in the detention, the ambassador to deport you, not to [unintelligible word 0:13:23], to volunteer to go back. Volunteer to go back means you can give hundred thousand euros, you have to guarantee my life, you have to guarantee the life [I waste] in this country. So why [we scream the fact] I speak it [common]?

It’s not fair, but why everybody was silent? Yes. This is not, not, I don’t talking before, that’s why I talk to you. I want to go deeper if you can change your mind, do more what I talked to you or can no [more], I can talk with you very [successful] of life. I want you to trust me.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: I don’t wanna [cross time], maybe tomorrow if you feel me. But if you do this, [I don’t get cross now], I’m sure of what I’m saying. I respect your interview.

INTERVIEWER: It seems--do you--when you--when you act and you motivate each other as a group, and you do things such as, yeah these protests, writing letters to parliament, taking things to court, what is the symbolic meaning for you as a group--doing these actions?

[0:14:35]

INTERVIEWEE: The action is like, there is no alternative. There is no result. We just do this, [what to fix, you only fix], you have to fix it. What is in your front you have to--

INTERVIEWER: Alright.

INTERVIEWEE: So, I have not [prepared] to be the leadership or to serve the whole group, or to be anyone, but it was there for me, that I have to survive today. And that is motivation like someone who go to work, then I’m [going to] go to work [and joke] you want that [unintelligible word 0:15:08]. It’s not good. If you went to your work, you have to work. If you went to school you have to study. Why you pay for your study? So this is our situation, I am here, I don’t have life, I have to breath, yes I have to do something to breath in a positive way.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think--do you think that over the years, over seven years, do you think that the strategies or the methods have changed and developed maybe with Dutch parliament or with local municipalities or
with changing location of the group? Do you think that the way that the group has operated or the ways that they try to be in the political space, do you think it’s changed?

[0:16:00]

INTERVIEWEE: What I think is, everything matters, [it’s interest] also matters for everything. If I our situation has been active, they have to be responding, and they changing for the things. Because every year, every month, there’s another thing. I’ll give an example about squatting in the house, how the owner they have the authority, about the [exposing] of the contract between the [candidate] and the housing owners and the housing rules and more than--every year more than five hundred or one thousand [unintelligible word 0:16:38]. Dutch citizen in Amsterdam couldn’t get a house, but there’s many buildings empty, but there is no one living, they only make like a, what do you call it? Antiakraak. Other cities, tough on this and conviction [unintelligible word 0:16:57] who exposing all these things.

Also why exposing [hit list] of the refugees. That anywhere they have refugee on the tram, on the boats, you don’t have train ticket because it’s not allowed to live in Holland, we don’t have home, we don’t have work. Then they want to [unintelligible words 0:17:17] that they cannot work all the time, [we don’t have passport].

But you take a bus by mistake, [unintelligible word 0:17:22] because of no condition, and police find out you don’t have they’ll stop the whole bus. Just take the refugee down [unintelligible words 0:17:30] no the policy is not that bad, you have to [hold in there], you have to stop the bus, you have to stop everybody inside the bus. Maybe somebody going to the work is late, just because of three euro fifty cent, or two euro eighty cent he gonna keep all the passenger inside the metro, inside the tram because of one person ticket. And inside the metro some people they have the warning from their [company]. Stop coming late, if you come late I gonna fire you [like this]. Then the tram because of one refugee who has not paid tram ticket, then others Dutch citizen affected by stupid of the police or by misleading of the policy that somebody don’t pay ticket you have to take him down, bus go. Police stop waiting, no. Bus will stop, police will stop. Then some people lose their job. Some people create many damages because of that.

[0:18:25]
So it create also problem that many people when I want interview for homeless people. So they give me interview I was [shock]. Some of them it’s like, example similar what I say is happening. And they lose their job, from that they couldn’t pay for their house, from there they couldn’t [unintelligible words 0:18:40] because of the tram thirteen minutes [late], because of one thing happen, they couldn’t [unintelligible word 0:18:46] this work. And they have problem already, they couldn’t explain, the boss don’t want to listen. He loses his job and his hunger. And now he’s a homeless person, he don’t have a house, now he was [psycho], then [unintelligible word 0:18:58] house, to keep--so all these things something. Like a--

INTERVIEWER : --a pattern?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.

[0:19:04]

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, [understand] for the ‘We are Here’. So, we expose many things they didn’t like, we expose the city’s for the student to show difference. Undocumented and--undocumented difference they living what [strength to have], to introduce ourselves to the student to make all the student different university [unintelligible words 0:19:26] [to know what’s clear], to be more international.

Also, at the same time, the group tried to make things right too, because some things we do to have opportunities to go to court, to get opportunity to meet the mayor or try to you know a lot of skills, that we are not trained for that, that they come for also, we take actions. So, we see a lot of changes.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, There’s, this I’m talking behind the scene.

INTERVIEWER : Behind the scenes?

INTERVIEWEE: I don’t talking about demonstration people see, I don’t talk about who squat the house how the [unintelligible word 0:20:08] come, I don’t talking about some music, a documentary we make, or movie, I don’t—I’m talking behind the scene.

INTERVIEWER : Behind the scene.
INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it’s happening, but people don’t know. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And is that happening in order to change policy? Behind the scenes? Cause the visibility is maybe to educate people and to show the world what you’re doing and what you’re going through? Is the behind the scenes more--

INTERVIEWEE: No, behind the scenes is somebody’s crying, how he can survive it? People sitting in America, saying Holland is perfect. Amsterdam is best. People in Africa, say no, but I’m dying in Holland. That is behind the scene.

And don’t wanna die. I cry a lot. So there’s nothing special. I just want normal life like everyone. And why I’m here, people lying, that everybody in Holland is good people, living good, but me I don’t live in good, I don’t have a right. So I can die, I wanna [see is] these people talking something on my head. It’s not true. I have also remember, I’m here, maybe [unintelligible word 0:21:22] Holland they took it. That’s ‘We are Here’.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I understand. So, since 2012, the group has remained together which is often times the message of ‘We are Here’, is that we are here together, not individually. How has the group managed to stay active and stay together despite a lot of challenges, mostly from evictions or detentions or dispersals? But the group has stayed together.

[0:22:07]

INTERVIEWEE: Most challengeable is our principle.

INTERVIEWER: Your, sorry?

INTERVIEWEE: Our principle?

INTERVIEWER: Your press pool?

INTERVIEWEE: Principle, principle, our commitment.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, your commitment.

INTERVIEWEE: The termination. Let’s stay together. Our principle that we learn a lot or try to task and trust every human being and to give him job or give him commitment what to do, to believe in. And when people do what you ask them to do, to believe in it, there is no [manipulation] there is no [divider] there is no personal interest, groups [unintelligible word

van den Helder 95
0:22:43]. But when we welcome everyone without no tasks everybody come talk to us, that’s why the group cannot successful. Even to not even been together. So it’s a challenge in that. Someone couldn’t want to follow what we see, who have one option, they can forget about us, not bye, we don’t want him, [unintelligible word 0:23:05] [only] will not feel okay for ourselves, [then to] you need somebody.

Because we want the group to be together and stay longer soon as everyone individually gets his own life because the situation created is too much. Every new people come in everyday from Africa, from different country, and soon the group is, the situation is see—we’re not the same people, [unintelligible word 0:23:31] the same people, but the same situation, so now we are advancing from more positive side in the sense of that we make new group and new principle with [all the belief that], I for Interviewee, you, anything you say [unintelligible word 0:23:49] what you says. So Interviewee said to you, “please if you hear anything different don’t believe it, believe me.” If it’s not, I cannot support you, you cannot support me.

Please, I don’t joke with you people, I have a principle. There’s no man or women enter here, cannot want to walk with us, can [unintelligible words 0:16:11], can [I] really do what I ask them to do. And if you do that means it’s [unintelligible word 0:24:16] not personality, and this man is—Then you can trust him forever and you can understand each other.

[0:24:24]

We don’t have nothing to do, just people who count on me, or people who I am presenting, or people who are guiding each other. I don’t want to disappoint. So this is how the group has changed to be strong. Like challenge I’m doing with you, I believe you can understand how I can know that you are family, or you can know that your solidarity, has fully for us, also to negotiate, and I agreed to move forward because we don’t risk anybody, and I don’t want someone risking the group. It’s challenging, many supporters, many times people say, “they are drunkards, they are rapers, they are [greedy],

[0:25:10]

they are liars.” Because of one or two reason. [unintelligible words 0:26:16] I’m a refugee, I shouldn’t be a refugee. No place like a home. No place like a home. Then I live in my home. You cannot believe that something is not good. Ever sickness, every poverty, maybe bad
government, every [secret] court, maybe traditional, maybe I’m gay, maybe I’m resident, maybe war, maybe anything.

So, because of the people they recognize you, then, then--you leave your country. I come to your own country. There is no normal person, Dutch person whether a man or a woman can complain, refugee not good. Or complain—anything [unintelligible word 0:26:05]. Dutch person, so if I’m a Dutch person, Dutch man fight me, I can understand, I will fight you. But refugee fight me, I’m a Dutch person, I will not fight him, because I want to help him. You understand me? I want to make [allocation] for me. A Dutch man can do something stupid or drink with me, fuck, do something stupid, I will take him serious, but a refugee or foreigner, I will forgive him because I sympathize him. So that’s the principle, they [strip] from the reality. And that’s what I think, Dutch people who challenging refugee, somebody know [unintelligible word 0:26:48] don’t have complete right, they have. You’re wasting your time.

INTERVIEWER : They don’t understand--

INTERVIEWEE: You’re wasting your time, you have to sympathize...

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: --even giving time, even forgiving if you tried to--only person that can challenge [you] people who you know you and have right to have, have you already have, then you have your point. So if you don’t think that you are not normal person.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.

[0:27:08]

INTERVIEWEE: You try to come here, to create proof that they are bad people, they are this, they are this. Even they do bad for you, for you, you can forg—you can understand it [easily]. And be yourself because you are normal Dutch, what you benefit, you go tell people, “I came here, these people drinking beer, they’re touching me, they do this.” [You do] something yourself. Because if you’re Dutch person, you need do that, you know [unintelligible word 0:27:35]. [But if refugee seem like they did], only okay, I give up, but for me I have reason, I want to help them. But they [strip] that. Challenging everything for us. And this challenging the Dutch people do it. They’re drunk too much [unintelligible word 0:27:56] they’re drunk. They drink in the street, start fight, [don’t why
they] make a mistake, they fuck another girl, or they make a new--. It’s normal. That’s not happening here--anything like this drink--. For what? It’s not normal. [Hear them] to use simple thing, going all over the world, even in America. [Family] drink. Veel drinken. But it doesn’t matter.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, but they use it like you don’t have right.

So [that’s my point].

INTERVIEWER : Use it negatively.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah, okay. How do you define the ‘We are Here’ group?

INTERVIEWEE: Hmm?

INTERVIEWER : How do you define the ‘We are Here’ group?

[0:28:44]

INTERVIEWEE: How did I find them? No I didn’t find them. What do you mean?

INTERVIEWER : Oh sorry, define, like is it a group, are there members...?

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER : Is it a collective?

[0:28:56]

INTERVIEWEE: It’s a collective of refugees.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah, and what does that mean?

INTERVIEWEE: As a group. They are visible. Visible, collective, undocumented people who has been rejected from the Dutch citizen. Has no has solution.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Other than to be on the street but they chose to be together, in a squatter house, to [make] their house. [And under the law].
INTERVIEWER : Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: It’s a collective group.

INTERVIEWER : That is also the definition I have so--

[laughter]

It’s been confirmed. Yeah. That’s all the questions I have.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER : Thank you so much.

INTERVIEWEE: I want to [add] one thing for the last questions. You know, funny you say about collective. Collective is like a different human beings, different people, different situation. But they are one situation, with different situation take you out of your home but it’s one situation it makes you--

INTERVIEWER : It unites.

[0:30:02]

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. So if you put it in a group of issues like a psychological or like a how do you call it? Mindset of people [that are] believing. You know I believe in life that every human being born in this world has an opportunity to live and opportunity to give back to the world, because the world we are living human being have authority for everything so, if you look at what’s happening in the world today, like people are refugees, this is earthquake, this is accident, this is war, a lot of things happen, but other things shouldn’t happen. Because why it should happen? [We don’t learn with evidence to have to be]. A person like you graduates, makes this [scope]. This one [unintelligible words 0:30:59]. Some people make a camp but they don’t know what to do, [unintelligible word 0:31:04] accident. Some people make play they don’t know when to stop play--but somebody make the play. You think somebody—to somebody cannot make something cannot stop--then somebody can make something to stop play [to not] accident.

[0:31:15]

So but then trust [their] self, [unintelligible word 0:31:19], quality, [unintelligible word 0:31:23], the color, first country, third country, [for citizen in the world]. Deny the fact that, how many millions of people dying each year? Africa, some Eastern Europe. If all these people has
opportunity, like maybe I don’t have opportunity but [unintelligible words 0:31:44] my life, have opportunity like us. Maybe they can do more than what I do. Maybe all these people can live in [great] and bring idea, the solution, who cannot solve to be solve. Because they don’t give their back to the world, they don’t have the opportunity, they don’t have experience, they don’t have the life to live. [unintelligible words 0:32:02] the script. They not giving nothing. So, you cannot complete, have to be complete when we start missions, start [poison], let people all over the world [unintelligible words 0:32:14] to know things, to contribute to challenges of the positive. Collective of how can contribute, how the world we are living. That’s the [unintelligible words 0:32:24] the cities in our continent.

[0:32:26]

Then they can see Europe tried, some few people [over the] western world, train themselves, see how they advance, so when they try to [go work], they can see that nothing will [unintelligible words 0:32:36].

INTERVIEWER : They can see sorry?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah I see, an American, Europe. They try trust their self [educated] any possibility from [unintelligible words 0:32:44]. You see how fast and safety they are going on. So when they tried all over the world, they can see there is no car accident, there is no drunk person in this world, there is no [dead] person, who cannot fix everything. So that’s the global challenge, after twenty or fifty years have to come because that’s the overwhelming of life going through.

Refugee crisis [unintelligible words 0:33:10]. So now what is wanting to come and unite all the whole world. Every country challenging, America [unintelligible word 0:33:18], India [unintelligible words 0:33:20]--everybody’s equal. That’s what come in the last fifty years. [unintelligible words 0:33:25] Here and there. I don’t know. I’d like to live long.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.

[laughter 0:33:29]

INTERVIEWER : Me too.

INTERVIEWEE: That’s something like I give special for interview.

INTERVIEWER : Yeah.
INTERVIEWEE: It’s good you to take this last word. To challenge every government, not challenge, to [order] them to listen to these parts.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that--

INTERVIEWEE: It’s good to publish it. I can put my name in there--. I have born in Sudan [unintelligible words 0:33:48] My mother tongue--

INTERVIEWER: What’s your last name?

INTERVIEWEE: --

INTERVIEWER: --?

INTERVIEWEE: A. For Air. R for Richard.


INTERVIEWER: Oh, I’m sorry.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

And R.

[pause]

R. R. Not A. [unintelligible words 0:34:12]

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

[pause]

Got it.

INTERVIEWEE: [states name]

INTERVIEWER: I think it’s interesting when you look at citizenship which is what I want to study, when you look at historically, which I think relates to your point, all the time that people who are expanding citizenship, being more inclusive, it’s always motivated by people who don’t have citizenship. So you look at like women who used to not be citizens, you look at a lot of mar—excluded ethnic groups, especially in the U.S. There’re—when they don’t have citizenship, and they are motivated and they create a movement—
[0:35:05]

INTERVIEWEE: Both sides, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that’s how citizenship is expanded. It sounds like you would like to see that as well for--

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: --migrants.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah because my, when I was in detention, in the Rotterdam, last year August 28, a police was arrested me because of, I started a house for the group. So have to be arrested, I have to be in prison. So I’ve been in prison almost [three months]. So they tried to deport me, so [all agree] that they couldn’t deport me, so I’ve been released in December, then I went to the courts, on April 12, yes and [expressed]. And I win the case but they said, ‘you fined for one fifty.’ But not for me it’s for the group. But I appealed for it, why I shouldn’t be punished and why the United Nations has been--misleading by [unintelligible word 0:36:01] go the wrong place and they wasn’t misleading that it was a proper place where people hijacking go there faster before us. So makes us [gitty]. And no one was fighting, only one of our [brothers] was forgetting. So I tried to get [them] in, so their pushing the [unintelligible words 0:36:18] I tried to protect myself. So from there the media make it radical, fighting and this, this and a wanted person for nothing, refugee. Holland, they are interested to prove wrong you know, he’s very [sick] man, sorry.

So, I mean it. Then I’ve been to the [unintelligible words 0:36:36]. They talk about me in the newspaper every year. I can’t be a wanted person. Then I’ve been to jail, I come out, then I went to court, I win it, and appear for review.

[0:36:45]

And what I’m trying to say to you is that there’s a lot of unnecessary law, has not been --America law is tough. America law tough with the dangerous things. It’s not tough on minor things. The law of this place, tough on minor things. If you see something, he has someone who don’t have passport, maybe go steal again in the shop, you see now, I give you two years. [unintelligible words 0:37:15] You should just to give him passport, if you do that then it can change him.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and then he can--
INTERVIEWEE: You see my point?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah I do.

INTERVIEWEE: So what can—what life left for you then? This is the challenge. This policy, I say that, they have to be very [sincere], which way they want. So I’m looking for that too. If you finished with this, I’m looking forward to talk with you. I’m looking forward to go more deeper, but I need your help. For me to trust you and I want you to believe me, it doesn’t matter the days, you somebody. It doesn’t matter I only just one word can be change. It’s up to you, but in reality, maybe I want me to go more deeper for issue. Yeah. I think it can help if you are the person, because you are American. Also can create something better. Not a little [sea]. I cannot have a sense of where I want to go, for goodness. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah. Okay.

[End of Interview 0:38:18]